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any possible publication.

AMERICAN POLICY AND POLITICS

Reflections from Southeast Asia

I

Decision and Division

In these three meetings I am going to attempt a difficult task -- to find instruction from the events of the last six years of American engagement in Vietnam without engaging either in attack or defense, and while seeking not to complicate unduly the task of any of those who must deal with them today. Since division and discord have marked the public (and much private) discussion of this hard case at least since 1963, the tone I seek is not easily found, and to sustain it I attempt both detachment and impersonality.

Such detachment and impersonality have a special advantage for me. I had a part in these events, working for two of the Presidents who have tried to find a good way through them. Both of these men -- and especially President Johnson, in whose time the war grew large and terrible -- have been attacked in the most deeply personal terms, and often the ammunition has been provided by their own associates. I do not want to get in that position. So if conclusions of mine imply any criticism or reassessment of what was done in earlier years, I hope it may be accepted that insofar as the criticism applies to persons, it should be aimed at myself. And to avoid misunderstanding I should say at the outset that in my determined judgment no man ever tried harder, or with deeper commitment, to do right about Vietnam than President Johnson.

The initial premise of these lectures is at once simple and demanding -- it is that all large efforts in foreign affairs require understanding and support from the

opinion of the nation. Sustained operations abroad require sustained support at home, and it is in this context that I look for lessons from Vietnam.

A second premise -- and I recognize that it is much more debatable -- is that it was right, in some form and by some means, to act to avoid a Communist victory ^{as needed} by force of arms in Vietnam in 1965 and thereafter. I suppose this is not the majority view today, but it is mine, and I have to start, on these matters, from where I am. The decisions of 1965 deserve the most critical attention from students, and as to their shape and form I myself could now suggest improvements, as the argument of these meetings will show. Still I do not want to pretend to views I do not hold -- any more than I want to go over familiar arguments again.

One reason for avoiding a rehearsal of old debates is that in many of its particulars this war is simply unique. There is much to be learned from the symposia that have addressed the problem of avoiding "the next Vietnam," but I think the truth is that nothing specifically resembling Vietnam is remotely likely in any near future. That country is unique; the evolution of the American involvement is unique; and of course there was no Vietnam before Vietnam. The preventive effect of Vietnam is ^{yes} ^{PP} in its history, not in what we say about it. We are not faced with any danger of a repetition of this precise experience. So it makes sense to look for somewhat more general lessons. Such lessons may have relevance to other kinds of troubles which we shall surely have -- and they may also be useful in the last phases of the Vietnam engagement itself. We will not have another Vietnam, but we are not out of this one yet.

Moreover, though I believe that it is very unlikely that we shall get through the last thirty years of the century without any need for direct military commitment in hard circumstances, the lessons I seek to find from these last years do not need war for their application. They have to do with questions of connection, of command, of accountability, and of comprehension which have at least equal relevance in such matters as (1) the control of nuclear weapons, which is essential to the survival of life on earth; (2) the relation of power and prestige between super states, a tough question that can bring on World War III if it is ever answered wrong; (3) the arrangement of rights and responsibilities for the conduct of all our foreign relations.

More specifically, the lessons I look for bear on the real business of the men who are stuck with the responsibility for decisions which daily turn the American future into the American past. Although there is no probable second Vietnam in our future, other troubles can be relied on to take its place. Which ones, in which order, we cannot say -- but we cannot expect a midsummer siesta in a future which includes -- for geography -- the Middle East, Central Europe, South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and for substance -- nuclear weapons, trading conflicts, population, food and law.

I have a final hope for the use of detachment: it is that it may surprise some of you into comment. Debate has been vehement in earlier years -- and again I have had some part in that (always of course as the aggrieved victim of unprovoked aggression). The bitterness of debate has often operated to foreclose a sober discussion directed to understanding rather than to attack or defense. In any case I do hope for comment,

and because I expect to learn from such discussion and to improve my argument accordingly, the lectures are, for the present, off-the-record. This Council may not yet be as representative of all ages and all serious opinions as we would like, but it is one of the few places I know where one can air one's unfinished thoughts to *la* colleagues without publicity. In this important respect it is a better place for thought than the United States Government.

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All three of these lectures are about policy and politics. The first centers about the politics of domestic support and criticism; the second deals with the politics of command, and the third will consider the politics of extrication.

We begin, then, with the politics of the home front. What does Vietnam tell us about the relation between policy and politics. I turn first to the great referendum: the Presidential Election. It is clearly the most important meetingplace of policy and politics in our national life. But the troublesome lesson of the last decade is that no matter what side you are on, you cannot count on a Presidential campaign to determine national policy.

Vietnam has dominated two American elections already, and if it does not dominate a third, then its very unimportance may be a crucial element in the result. But neither in 1964 nor in 1968 did the election decide the events in the way most people hoped.

Parenthetically, let me remind you that it is possible to feel great outrage at *H4!* the thought that the process of a political election should have heavy influence on

decisions about the conduct of the war. To the military commander whose clearly perceived needs are not met because "this is not the time" or to the committed believer that a given line of action must be stopped now, the claims of the electoral cycle are not compelling. Men who are executing a complex long-range effort with a timetable of its own cannot but be chagrined when they find that the governing timetable of their superiors in Washington is the 4-year cycle of Presidential elections, and soldiers in dangerous service may have stronger feelings still.

Yet these complaints, at least in their simpler forms, do not survive analysis. OK

The election too is a solemn business with a moral authority of its own. It is not wrong for Presidents and other candidates to address themselves to that tribunal or to accept the demands of that timetable. The problem -- and there is one -- does not lie in the fact that political men respect the claims of the Presidential election. The Constitution and the laws of political survival make that course both right and necessary. It does no good to shake one's fist at the fact that the great prize of legitimate executive authority is awarded once every four years by an appeal to all the people.

To begin to see where the trouble lies, let us look at the questions raised about the election of 1964. Two contrasting complaints are made. The more familiar one is that the Johnson Administration campaigned against a wider war and then promptly started one, and the frequent assumption is that this was sheer duplicity. It was not; ^{HA YES!} it was a failure of overstatement much like that of Franklin Roosevelt in 1940, when he made his famous promise not to send "your boys" to "foreign wars." As I will try to show later, the Administration in 1964 did not know what 1965 would require in Vietnam,

*? + BJ!**till after election!*

and it preferred not to "decide"; that preference was itself heavily affected by the *yes* imminence of the election, but there were other good reasons too, the simplest and most compelling being the fact that any new decision would be so painful that it would *No* be better to avoid it if possible. The Administration campaigned vigorously on Vietnam, but it campaigned on a stance, not a policy.

A LYING STANCE

The stance against a wider war was real enough -- this was the clear hope and *yes* purpose of the President, and it is only fair to recall that it was balanced by an equally firm stance -- equally untranslated into detailed policy -- against abandonment of South Vietnam. If both parts of it were not heard plainly by many who later felt a sense of aggrieved betrayal, part of the trouble was in their own hearing. The Presidential documents for 1964 can leave no fair reader in any doubt that Lyndon Johnson was publicly and plainly determined to "stay the course" in South Vietnam.

Another part of the trouble was that the alternative was Barry Goldwater. Both the President and his supporters campaigned with great energy against Senator Goldwater as a man of carefree and simplistic militarism. In comparison with the Goldwater of the 60s, Lyndon Johnson was and is a profoundly careful and unmilitaristic man. In 1964 that comparison was given all the emphasis that the arts of politics and the spotlights of the White House could devise. If the opposing candidate had been Mark Hatfield, it is a good guess that a different kind of contrast would have been developed.

But of course, as we now know all too clearly, the stance of 1964 was not enough for 1965. By then you had to choose between doing a lot more and getting

thrown out. You could argue about how much, or about whether it was worth it, or even somehow wrong in itself. But you could no longer avoid the choice. So the hard question about 1964 is whether it did not both delay and obscure what Henry Kissinger calls the necessity for choice. But before attacking that question we need to remember the election of 1968.

In 1968 the name of the central issue was not at all in doubt: it was the war. Moreover, the election did throw out the party that had lost public confidence mainly because of the war. This large and simple result may be as much as one can ask of a single election. But if so, then what are we to make of the irony that in their anger at Hubert Humphrey as "Johnson's man," the opponents of the war helped mightily ^{thus but --} to elect a man whose long public record on Indo-China showed him to be much more of a "hawk" than either Johnson or Humphrey -- a man whom Senator Goldwater could cheerfully support? Was it some special anger among anti-war liberals which made them talk as if Nixon and Humphrey were really alike? In part, surely, it was, though the partisans of the war had done their share to help that anger grow. But do we not have to face the fact here that a national election can do little more than throw the ins out or prevent the outs from getting in? So the question is presented: how does this crude process relate, either well or badly, to the explanation of policy in war?

The lessons of 1968 are not encouraging. Not only did the war's opponents give Mr. Nixon all kinds of help by concentrating their fire on the Administration, but the Administration and Senator Humphrey were so preoccupied with framing their own policies that they were in no position to ask Mr. Nixon what he would do. So no one

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* Reson to the N now able to get out

*true**my speech*

anywhere raised sharply with Mr. Nixon the question whether he really did have what he said he had -- a plan to end the war. Once, and once only, in New Hampshire on March 4, Mr. Nixon had made a flat statement, "I pledge to you that new leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific."^N Reporters pressed him in March for clarification (they did not get it), but the other candidates did not -- not then and not later. How could they? They could not answer for themselves. Instead the Democrats fought a destructive civil war among themselves.

Thus neither on its eve in 1964 nor at its climax in 1968 was the policy of the war in Vietnam clarified by the politics of a national election. All that the election could do was make choices -- and the choices of the all-out opponents of the war must seem in retrospect particularly bitter: to avoid Goldwater they took Johnson, and to ^{no} punish the Johnson Administration they helped Nixon.

To return to 1964 and the situation in Vietnam -- it does appear that the campaign was separated from the process of decision, and the same thing happened in 1968 for somewhat different reasons: In each case President Johnson was keeping Vietnam -- or at least current Presidential decisions on Vietnam -- from an open role in the elections. Lyndon Johnson, in 1964, did no more than he thought he had to do in Southeast Asia, and this of course is what makes mincemeat of the notion that he would have "planned" anything as unsettling and disquieting as the episodes of August in the Tonkin Gulf. His

N. For this quotation I rely on Jules Witcover's book, "The Resurrection of Richard Nixon." (pg. 258)

handling of Tonkin Gulf certainly did help the President in the short run -- Theodore White in early 1965 could call it "a deft response...carried off with the nicest balance between boldness and precision" -- but the Tonkin Gulf affair was not a policy. It was part of a political stance.

The real decisions of the Johnson Administration were deferred until 1965. It is not clear to me, in retrospect, that they would have been taken in 1964 even if there had been no election. They were painful decisions, and the hope that they would not be necessary would have died hard in any year. But it is clear that the election provided a formidable reinforcement to the natural inertia of governments facing hard choices. I think it will usually be so, and I very much doubt that it is wise to suppose that any American government can force itself to the framing of a new policy with major long-term consequences in an election year unless circumstances -- or the prospect of great political advantage -- literally force the choice. That happened in 1940 and again in 1948; it did not happen in 1964, and no one near him pressed the campaigning President for big decisions he was not ready to make. *yes!*

Again in 1968, the President did what he could to separate his conduct of the war from the process of the campaign. I know that by then there was a problem of credibility, but I for one fully accept the President's statement in his extraordinary speech of March 31, 1968, that one major reason for his retirement from the Presidency -- and so from candidacy -- was the opportunity to decouple the decisions of a wartime President from the engrossing exigencies of a campaign. And whatever the full reasons for his action, it seems clear, on the evidence of what he actually did in 1968, that

ye! We left war going!

he moved the question of policy above the campaign. Certainly he did not accommodate those who believed with equal force both in the substantive wisdom of an early and complete halt in the bombing of the DRV and in the political value of such a halt in forestalling a Nixon victory.

so-blame Kennedy/LBJ!

A nagging question remains: is it just as undemocratic to take great decisions out of political campaigns as it is to push them past Election Day? The answer, once again, must be simply that the Presidential Election is a crude device. In its own strange ways -- not considered here -- it will nominate A and B (and sometimes a small c or d) -- and then the people will choose which one they don't want. The system often punishes; it only occasionally rewards. It can choose and reject men, and its survivors will have demonstrated important qualities of stamina and political judgment, but it does not easily make foreign policy decisions. If we want a more sharply articulated connection between policy and politics, we must look elsewhere.

Yet there is one aspect of Presidential politics on which I would linger a moment because it suggests a theme that I would like to get into the discussion early, and this is the question whether or not the Presidential election can -- or should -- be a test of where some real majority -- or some active center -- stands. My own view is that if American policy and American politics do have a predilection for the center, it is a good thing. In many great issues of foreign affairs this point is plain. To the parallel despair of reactionary and radical -- of Isolationist and Globalist -- of Realpolitik and Idealists -- the process of policy and of politics has often tended toward a middle view, preferring solidity of support to clarity of conception. All the major

yes!

undertakings of American post-war policy abroad have turned on the capacity of the Executive Branch to take and hold the Center. UN.adherence, Marshall Plan, NATO, the Kennedy Round, Cuban Missiles, Strategic Strength, Test Ban Treaty, Middle Eastern policy, all have held the Center.

Yet the painful fact may be that the Center is often crowded with strange bedfellows. Is this not one hard lesson of Vietnam? From the beginning we have handled this matter with support that was internally divided. There has been a center, most of the time, and Administrations have tried to stay in step with it most of the time, but it has been a center framed by rejection -- and by very different, even opposite, kinds of rejection. In the beginning LBJ sought and held most of those who Wouldn't Go North and most of those who Wouldn't Retreat; at the moment of decision their views would be opposite, but for 1964, to their common comfort and later discomfiture, they agreed on him.

In passing, let me remark that in 1971, when the majority of Americans have turned strongly against the war, so that the center belongs to the man who can take that ground in the most persuasive terms, there is still deep internal division among the majority. The war has grown unpopular both among the students and the townspeople of Kent, Ohio, but their reasoning is not the same.

But if we take this concern for the center and turn back to the elections of 1964 and 1968, I fear that we get a divided message. There is no trouble in 1964. There, in a campaign whose premises were as obvious as they were successful, the Democrats took and held the left, the center, and much of the moderate right. But in 1968? I have

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already suggested that the offensive fringe of the new left was a help to Mr. Nixon; in that sense he was given a claim upon the center which he skillfully asserted. But in other respects that election remains very hard to read. I do not think it is a denial of majority sentiment, as the liberal and left opponents of the war assert -- but I cannot make it yield a judgment by a real majority, either. It remains no more, to me, than a close verdict against the Ins. We must take our worry about the center to the next arena -- where the President meets the Congress.

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The role of the Congress in the framing of foreign policy is an old topic which has lately taken on new interest -- perhaps especially in the Congress itself. This is a welcome renewal. In particular, I believe, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has made a major contribution by its extended studies of the complex set of commitments and neo-commitments in which we have gradually engaged or enmeshed ourselves over a long period of years in countries whose cooperation we have sought for one reason or another. While occasionally one must smile at the tone of aggrieved astonishment surrounding "revelations" of connections which were not secret from careful readers of the newspapers, one must recognize that in a way the grievance is real. When Senators on the relevant Committee do not know about something for which their support is needed, it really is the fault of the Executive Branch. Indeed this proposition is near to the center of what I have to say about the role of Congress. The Congress cannot, in my view, make the complex decisions of foreign policy; neither can it conduct a war. But it is the place where the Executive can and should explain itself at every stage, and

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what cannot be explained successfully should be undertaken only in the most exceptional circumstances.

To keep the Congress responsibly engaged in a demanding course is not easy, and it is well to remember that if in the end President Johnson failed to keep the Congress with him on Vietnam, it was not for want of effort, experience, and skill. It is quite easy to see that there was a gradual and increasingly serious breakdown of confidence -- indeed of mutual confidence -- between the White House and the Senate between 1964 and 1968, but it is also easy to get the causes confused.

Let us consider, for example, the unhappy history of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. I have already suggested on good authority that the President's handling of the episode was helpful to him in the campaign, and I would hold also that for its meaning in 1964 the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was a sound statement of the sense of the Congress. Grant, for argument, that the episodes in the Gulf lacked the crystalline clarity which was an inescapable part of Secretary McNamara's style of testimony -- nevertheless they did happen; they were surprising in what they suggested of the temper of Hanoi; the response was measured, and the Resolution itself said what most Americans and nearly all Congressmen then believed about the importance of Vietnam.

So I think it is a mistake for Senators and journalists to plead guilty in retrospect about their part in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. If the debate had gone ten days or ten weeks instead of ten hours; if all the evidence of confusion and uncertainty at sea had been fully aired; if my colleague Fred Friendly had pulled all his reporters together and pooled their wisdom and insight, or if he had assembled all the professors and

intellectuals for ten nights of prime-time discussions, they would have emerged with
 21E // a consensus favorable to the Resolution. For the Resolution was not then -- and was
not then intended to be -- what Nicholas Katzenbach later called it -- the functional
 equivalent of a declaration of war, and it is certainly true that at least this much could
 and should have been made very plain in a more extended debate. The Resolution was
 a double-barreled statement of the stance the President, the Congress, and the country
 NO then wanted. As such it was bound to pass, whether in a long debate or a short one.

To make this clear, we need only look at both barrels as they were then understood. The best summary may be the one given by Senator Fulbright in the 1964 debate:

"In a broad sense, the joint resolution states that we approve of the action taken with regard to the attack on our own ships, and that we also approve of our country's effort to maintain the independence of South Vietnam." *which was...?!*
 (34A!)

It is quite true that the language of the Resolution, borrowing as it did from the language of treaties and of other resolutions, was broader -- it spoke of the maintenance of peace and security in the area as "vital" to our "national interest." It also authorized the President to use "armed force" to assist South Vietnam (and other states covered by SEATO). But this was in the context of a minor retaliatory air raid and a U. S. presence of 20,000 men, with no combat units ashore. In Congressional action of this sort, the context is everything.

There is a different complaint against the Southeast Asian Resolution, namely that the Administration should not have combined the specific case of the Tonkin Gulf with the much more general affirmation of support by armed force for the

independence of South Vietnam. President Johnson more than once remarked, in press conferences of later years, that the need for a broad Resolution had been discussed in June and July. But no action was taken then, and obviously the startling events in the Gulf did provide an occasion for achieving a result that might have been much harder to get without them. Was this the legitimate stroke of a master legislator or a dirty trick? I hold the former view, but I think I can hold it only if I concede that a Resolution passed in this context was, by that fact, a limited instrument.

To see what went deeply wrong with the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, we must look beyond 1964, and I do not think the best place to look is in the Foreign Relations Committee's re-examination of 1968. By then the war was three years old and full of trouble and pain for all concerned. It is no wonder at all that Senators long since disenchanted with the President's policy should then feel that if they had it to do over again they would do it differently. But the real lessons are deeper and come earlier.

The crucial breakdown of the relations between the Congress and the President was not in 1964, but somewhere between early 1965 and the time of Senator Fulbright's famous hearings in January and February of 1966. Certainly part of the problem may have been personal -- if there had been a different President and a different chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, the relations between them might well have been different. It can also be argued that if there had been no falling-out between them over the Dominican Republic in the summer of 1965, these two old friends might not have separated the way they did on Vietnam. But beyond the personalities was a much more subtle and instructive matter. What really happened in 1965, I believe, is that

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for their own separate reasons both the Congress and the Executive Branch decided that it was better for both of them that the big decisions which changed the shape of American engagement in the war should be taken by the President alone.

The Congress was not kept in the dark about these decisions. Indeed the country was not kept in the dark; there are plenty of real mistakes in the Vietnam record,

LIE but it is important not to encumber the record with myths. Neither the possibility of bombing the North nor the prospect of a major commitment of ground combat forces to Vietnam -- the two major decisions of 1965 -- was a secret before it happened. I

have recently refreshed my own memory of these matters by some reading in the back files of the New York Times for 1965. They make it plain that people knew what was going on.

In the weeks immediately preceding the President's critical decision on troop movements in July 1965, for example, the story from Washington on his deliberations was regularly on page 1, and as the decision drew near, the volume (and to my

LIE memory the accuracy) of the reporting and analysis steadily increased. If the Congress did not intrude itself on these deliberations -- and it did not -- it was by clear and

conscious choice. I am no expert on the reasons for that choice. One may speculate that most members of the Congress had confidence in the President's judgment and shared his apparent conviction that it was necessary to take further action; it seems plausible

also that many members, at that stage, were happy to interpret the Southeast Asia

Resolution as a mandate to the White House. Congressmen are presumably not unlike other men in their reluctance to share painful decisions. Finally, we must note that the small band of members who were already in open opposition were still regarded

almost as freaks; the majority of their colleagues kept a safe distance from them.

So the Congress, in quite relaxed fashion, left matters to the President. And while the President was in frequent and even intense consultation with individual trusted members, while he rigorously observed the formality of meeting with leaders of both parties and both Houses before major decisions were announced, and while his principal Secretaries appeared with their usual regularity before the relevant Committees, there was no new registration of Congressional agreement to the new course of action. So when criticism began to grow, in 1966, the Administration was almost forced to rely on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and to make it carry a weight for which it was inadequate. The Administration certainly had the plain words of the Resolution on its side, and for the time being only a few in the Congress chose to challenge its interpretation. Still a mistake had been made.

I am not concerned here with the reasons for this 1965 mistake. As I understand them, they are not discreditable. I think this was not a sin of intentional deception, but an error of democratic decision-making. Some in the Administration may have been concerned with the urgent agenda of legislation for the Great Society -- for them a long debate on foreign policy could appear as a distraction or worse. Others, occupied with the agonizing difficulties of the decisions themselves, may have been grateful not to have to face the sheer hard work of a full-dress Congressional process; still others may quite honestly have felt that the language of the Southeast Asia Resolution was as clear -- and as durable -- as need be.

The reasons do not matter as much as the consequences. The escalations of 1965 were no secret from the Congress, but the Congress was not effectively engaged

** why not? Because CBV had TGR!*

in them. There was no shortage of briefings, and indeed there were times when the President seemed to have made the state chambers of the White House a Situation Room for Senators and Congressmen. But while the clear purpose of the briefings was to sustain the support of the Congress, their assumption was that as in earlier wars, so in this one, all final responsibility must remain with the President. And questions about possible future actions were not enthusiastically received.

By early 1966 there had been a breakdown of trust between Senator Fulbright and the Administration, and his hearings, in January and February, were perceived by the White House as an adversary proceeding. In that situation it was natural that the Secretary of State resisted efforts to pin him down on the future intentions of the Administration. He could not tip the President's hand to an opponent, and when Senator Fulbright repeatedly pressed him to say whether approval of supplemental requests for funds should or should not be taken as approval of "an unlimited expansion of the war," the Secretary finally said he would "have to take it under advisement." (Hearings, p. 60-61). Later in the year the President flatly asserted that voting for appropriations was a reaffirmation of support for the war. But on this basis it was the 'need to support our boys' and not a reasoned agreement on the direction of policy that was governing the actions of the Congress. A Congress constrained is not a Congress convinced. The escalations of 1966 and 1967 were unimpeded, but they drew down steadily on the reservoir of trust between the White House and the Hill.

Was there another way? No one can be sure. But let us suppose for the moment that somewhere after Pleiku in February 1965 -- the beginning of air attacks in the

! not before ?!

Was TGR enough for this ?!

North -- and the major commitments of ground troops in July there had been hearings and a request for explicit Congressional support of the President's chosen course. It clearly could have been done, and the support would have been given. Similar requests could have been repeated as the war went on and the situation changed. We can only guess at the shape of the debates, but it seems at least possible that the trajectory of the conflict would have been moderated, and that an Administration which required itself to share responsibility with Congress, in reality and not merely in appearance, would have found itself required to think harder about the interlocking meaning of all aspects of its policy in Vietnam. And if, as seems likely, the opinion of the Congress would still have shifted from year to year somewhat as it has done in the event -- for it is the cost and pain of the war itself that have had most to do with that shift -- then the probable consequence of a policy of sustained partnership with Congress is that the war would have been more limited, that emphasis on the role and responsibilities of the Vietnamese would have come sooner and stronger, and that the real difficulties of negotiation would have been tested more effectively, and perhaps less misunderstood. A process of sustained partnership would not have converted Senator Morse, and it might not have made particular high officials comfortable with each other. But it might have given greater play to the quiet good sense and lambent patriotism of men like Mansfield and Aiken. It is not possible to reread the Congressional documents -- of 1966 especially -- without a strong sense of the eagerness of men like these to join in finding some way to help the Administration both in the shaping of its policy, and then in its defense.

to be accomplished!

HA!

This kind of continuing mutual engagement, between the Administration and the Congress, is almost the opposite of what is suggested by the complaint that there was never any declaration of war over Vietnam. Historically the effect of a declaration of war is to liberate the full powers -- legal and political -- of the Commander-in-Chief. War itself tends to increase those powers, and a declaration of war confirms the tendency. There were many good reasons for avoiding a declaration of war in 1964, or at any time thereafter. If both the President and the Congress were in favor of limited military commitment in those early years of the war (and they surely were), the right way to do it was not by a declaration of war but by just such a more limited action as the Southeast Asia Resolution. The error was not in that Resolution but in the fact that it was never reaffirmed or refined in later years.

In the end the Resolution suffered the fate of all political instruments that are made to do too much work. It wore out, and it became the target of bitter attack from those who felt, wrongly but understandably, that it had been used to deceive. In the adjournment process of December 1970, with no debate at all, and with no one left to defend it, it was repealed. And so the Congress seemed to be saying that the wow! independence and security of Southeast Asia no longer justified the use of armed force. Neither the Administration nor the Congress had any alternative authorizing process to propose, and the President was left with only his power as Commander-in-Chief to justify his military choices. I pass by the question of the powers conferred by the Southeast Asia Treaty, but I do not believe that a treaty vote of 1956 can be taken as authority for military operations in 1971 when a more explicit authorization has been

passed and repealed in the meantime. Certainly the collective sense of the Congress in 1971 appears to be that the President is on his own. By the Cooper-Church Amendment of 1970 the Congress has placed limits on what he can do, and it may go further in 1971 -- but this now seems to be an adversary process, with all the perils that process brings to the conduct of foreign affairs. Seen in retrospect the course of relations between the Administration and the Congress on Vietnam, since early 1965, is one long downhill slide into mutual mistrust and self-conscious separatism. As good a climax as any is Mr. Nixon's straightforward one-line statement of July 1, 1970 that while he was full of respect for Senator Cooper and Senator Church, "the difference between us is that I have responsibility for 440,000 men and they do not." It is a difference which tells nothing about policy, and only a very little about politics. And it neglects the fact that it is the Congress which has the duty to "raise and support" the armed forces, wherever they may be.

I think it is not too late, even now, and even in Vietnam, to halt and reverse this downhill slide. In the last of these lectures I shall try to suggest some ways of doing that. But before we register the imperative of close connection, and continuous shared responsibility as a clear "lesson" from Vietnam, we need to go a little deeper into the underlying difficulties of the relation between the war and American politics. In particular we must turn to the phenomenon of "polarization."

That the war, in its seeming endlessness, has been powerfully divisive is a commonplace. What is more immediately instructive, I think, is that this division has been present right from the beginning. Feelings among the minority of interested

Americans were already polarized, and intense, in 1963, and as the problem grew from year to year, so did the intensity of feeling. Moreover, even before Vietnam became the dominant issue, the Sixties saw a steady growth of a new set of attitudes toward foreign policy. The new left was a growing force by 1964, and its attitude toward all forms of "cold war commitment" was skeptical, to put it mildly. There was, as I recall it, no parallel increase in the strength of those who believed most in those commitments and in holding firm wherever they were challenged, but there did not need to be; those forces were already quite strong enough. There was now a new political force in the field which was determined to adopt a position of intense adversary hostility to any policy such as that adopted in 1965. This new force was not the same as that represented by such critics as Walter Lippmann or Hans Morgenthau, whose reasoned criticisms of the course of policy in Vietnam were a familiar part of the scene, and with whom dialogue should have remained possible even when agreement did not. Much of the new left derived its view of the world from a deep indisposition to believe in any but American evil whenever Americans and Communists met. The distance from this view of the world to the one which had formed the expository style of the Administration was truly polar, and as the two poles attacked each other, they helped to polarize those between.

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As I look back I believe that the Administration failed to recognize the growing strength of the new left -- and even the new liberals. I believe that from the beginning we understood that the struggle in Vietnam would be demanding -- although we certainly underestimated the strength and tenacity of the Vietnamese Communists and the

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consequent cost of preventing their victory. But I do not believe we recognized how divisive it would be at home. The Johnson Administration has often been accused of the crude error of assuming that in geopolitical terms the late 60s and the early 50s were the same. Recognizing that specific statements could seem to justify that charge, I still think that in fact the President and the Secretary of State knew very well that the world was changing -- who more than Lyndon Johnson sought serious detente with Russia? I think our error was different: we failed to see that the balance of domestic opinion had shifted. Thus a precise repetition of the Korean war would have aroused much more anti-war opposition in the late 1960s than it did in the early 1950s. Indeed some of the middle-aged leaders of the New Left who gained a new order of prominence in the later 60s had been among those who suggested, in 1950, that it was Foster Dulles and not Kim il Sung who began the Korean war, and there is now some tendency among younger students of these matters to lump the two wars together as equally wrong. I think that if we had understood these things better we could have done more than we did to prevent polarization.

But in the event, of course, the polarization occurred. It happened more by repellence than attraction. Excess on one side stirred a sense of outrage on the other. Intermittently in 1965 and 1966 the Administration would reach out toward the more moderate of its critics, but its more usual posture was less accommodating, and in truth it is hard to make accommodations with men who are seeking a contest. The debate about the war in Vietnam had much of the inescapable harshness, on both sides, of the debate between isolationists and internationalists in 1940. But there was here no

uniting catastrophe like Pearl Harbor.

Instead there was only Vietnam, continuing from one weary year to the next to provide its own ample ammunition to those who were polarizing and polarized. As early as 1965 General Westmoreland remarked to me that no sandtable exercise at Fort Leavenworth had ever included a fraction of the complexity that marked Vietnam, and as a consequence the war could be read almost any way you wanted. It was a civil war and also a case of aggression; it was military, at its root, but also political; we were wanted by the South Vietnamese, and not wanted; they in turn were and were not ready to do "their part." The war was and was not covered by Treaties and, as we have seen, by Resolutions. Nothing about the war was simple, but simplifications were everywhere, both in the Administration and among its critics. Gray, I once suggested, is the color of truth in Vietnam. But black and white became, and still are, the colors of rhetoric at home.

To the Administration a particularly frustrating and angering aspect of the gray complexity of Vietnam was the difficulty of demonstrating propositions which, inside the government, seemed so self-evident as not to require argument. The most notable example here was the question of Hanoi's responsibility for the war. It seemed to us that no one who dealt seriously with Vietnamese affairs could escape from the clearcut conclusion that Ho Chi Minh was in charge on "the other side." Even before organized units began to move South, in 1964, we were not in doubt as to the source of inspiration, guidance, supplies and discipline. As compared to any other force in the field, including the United States Government itself, the Vietnamese

Communists, North and South, were a tightly unified force, and their leader was Ho. But it was quite another matter to prove it to the skeptical. The hard evidence was always fragmentary; much of the best of it was overclassified in deference to simplistic military considerations. Because people thought the case so obvious, the matter received too little attention, and as a consequence inadequate government pamphlets became relatively easy targets, as Chester Cooper has noted, for outside critics. The lesson for the future is clear: when there is deep division over a demanding course of action, it is not enough to have the realities on your side of any part of the argument. You must be able to show that they are. And when the realities are complex, it will not do to simplify them.

The Administration was not blind to the complexities of Vietnam; it suffered with them every day. But with rare and almost accidental exceptions -- as in the President's speech at Johns Hopkins in April 1965 -- it did not succeed in conveying its sense of the complexities to the nation -- and especially not to its more moderate critics. The President was probably more sensitive to this problem than a lot of the rest of us. Certainly he never tired of maintaining -- and emphasizing -- that his own policy was one of both military and political action, both of firmness and moderation, both determination and desire to negotiate.

But again, this was more a stance than a policy. More than that, it was a stance increasingly framed in light of the mounting domestic debate -- a response to political dissent rather than an affirmative exposition of what was happening in Vietnam and why. I have already argued that there was no real secret about the big

decisions of 1965. But there was also no depth or dimension to the exposition of the Administration's purpose.

Part of the trouble, once again, may have been in their very certainty that what they were doing was clear and good. Part of it also probably lay in the curious and unsatisfactory state of relations between the political and military leaders of the war, which I shall be discussing next week. Part of it was also caused by the polarization of sentiment, which made it hard to avoid the posture of attack and defense, even though it was balanced exposition that was most needed. When there were hundreds of hostile critics ready to turn every phrase back against you, it often seemed wiser to "hunker down." And part of it was both a product and a cause of that strange contest between Administration spokesmen and the press and television which was one of the most troubling features of the whole affair, and on which I attempt no judgment here. But whatever the causes, the result is clear: the Administration did not undertake and sustain the continuous task of exposition which was and is absolutely essential to the conduct of even the simplest war. The description of the war by the White House, like its justification before the Congress, remained static at the level of Baltimore; if anything the rhetoric grew simpler and more sweeping as time passed. But the war and its meaning did not stand still. It may have made sense in 1965 and 1966 to resist aggression and to offer negotiation. But in 1967 and still more in 1968, as the cost of the war expanded and no light appeared at the end of the tunnel, the explanation of the stance began to lose weight. Resist aggression forever? Offer negotiations that are rejected forever? Escalate forever?

There are difficulties behind these questions which we shall have to examine further in later meetings. But as I conclude this one, it is enough to offer this double suggestion about the uses of exposition. First -- if we had explained ourselves better, we would I think have found better understanding from the country than we did, even at the beginning. But second, and more important, the careful, and determined, and continuous exposure of the real course of the war could -- I think would -- have had an effect similar to that of responsible engagement of the Congress: it would have been a constructive constraint against the worst of what happened in the war -- the spreading use of excessive and inappropriate forms of power, and the unplanned shift of authority toward men with a view of the war which was deformed by their own preoccupations.

Consult the Congress; inform the people; keep the consultation and the information current and clear. These are obvious returns perhaps from a first attack on the subject. But they are not trivial.

II.

The Insufficiency of Desire

The argument of this second lecture is a double one: that the difficulties of our venture in Vietnam have been gravely compounded by two weaknesses -- one military and the other diplomatic -- which are deeply rooted in our process of thought and behavior and which will need to be corrected not only as we face the full range of foreign problems in the next decade, but also if we are to conduct the last phase in Vietnam in the least damaging way. The military weakness I find mainly, though not exclusively, inside the Executive Branch; the failure of diplomatic perception I find mainly, but not exclusively, among its critics. Taken together these two arguments will complete the groundwork for my attempt next week to draw instruction and guidance from what I have been saying for the immediate future. In passing, let me say that the title I originally chose for this lecture -- "War and Its Limits" -- no longer fits more than half of it. A better one for the ground I want to get through today would be "The Insufficiency of Desire," by which I mean to suggest that it is dangerous to think that either a weapon of war or a compromise proposal for peace will work merely because it belongs to you, and you like it.

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There are many lessons from our military experience in Vietnam, but to me the one of overriding importance is the truly critical need for a much closer and deeper interaction -- both of communication and command -- at all levels of the military and

political apparatus of the Executive Branch of the Government. The responsibilities of power will still be with us long after Vietnam, and those responsibilities cannot be effectively discharged if the process of military decision, action and assessment is not greatly improved over what we have experienced there.

Because this is a sweeping conclusion, I must begin by separating my argument sharply from those which would assert that there are a lot of war criminals in high places or that the true error was that of meddling civilians who forced the military men to fight with one arm tied behind them. There have been grave mistakes, as there have been in all our wars, and they deserve critical inquiry, but we shall not learn from them by any process of mutual recrimination. And it makes even less sense to suppose that any good interest is served by turning a blind eye to genuinely criminal acts like those at My Lai. There is some truth in the notion that "these things happen" in war, but it is no part of our military tradition to accept that fact as an excuse for acts that dishonor the uniform.

I myself think it important to begin the search for lessons by a recognition of some remarkable achievements. As always in war, we must put first the courage and skill of those whose lives were and are on the line. There are many specific achievements which deserve note: the deployment of 1965 and 1966 was a triumph of boldness in planning and energy in execution. The battlefield performance of those first forces exceeded expectations and proved groundless the fears of those who doubted our capacity to act quickly and strongly enough to avert defeat. These first achievements were followed by many more genuine feats of arms, and though I lack the familiarity

that would allow me to pick out particular episodes with precision, I am inclined to the view that special recognition should be given to the performance of all levels of the forces in South Vietnam at the time of Tet, 1968. It is true that the full force of the enemy's effort was not anticipated (Intelligence has not been the field in which we have outreached the Vietnamese Communists), and it is also true that the unexpected strength of the enemy performance had profound repercussions at home, but the military quality of the combined reply of the U. S. and South Vietnamese forces was decisive in administering a most costly defeat to the exposed Communist forces. When we look for reasons that may account for the opening of talks in Paris a few months later, I do not think we should omit the speed, skill, and success of the allied reaction to Tet.

Coupled with such achievements of our military men must be the fact that both military and political leaders have succeeded in keeping the war limited. There have been grave excesses, I think, but it is a critically important fact that the war has not escalated beyond Indo-China. I underline this point because a recurrent concern among critics from the beginning has been the danger that the struggle would escalate to the level of another war with China (we sometimes forget that we fought one limited war against millions of Red Chinese in 1950-53). In early 1966, for example, Walter Lippmann asserted that under what he called the Rusk-McNamara policies "it is highly probable, indeed it is well nigh inevitable that the United States will find itself confronting China in a land war on the mainland of Asia." It was an honest nightmare, but it did not happen, and it did not happen because the Administration -- specifically including Mr. Rusk and Mr. McNamara -- took great care that it should not. In the intelligence

community's estimates of what would and would not produce a land war with China the Administration was ably served, and in its own insistence on remaining well on the safe side of the line it was unbending. We have had plenty of nightmarish reality but war with China would indeed have been much worse than anything that has actually happened.

Finally, in this sample of the achievements of both military and political leaders, I should list the fact that at least at the top they were honorable in their dealings with one another. There were difficulties of communication, I think, and also differences of command doctrine; there was even an implicit adversary relationship. But there was not maneuvering of the sort made notorious by another general in the time of Korea. As I go on to worry about their difficulties with one another, I hope I may be understood as recognizing both their remarkable qualities as men and the extraordinary complexity of the task they faced. To argue that we must do better in the future is not at all to say that it would have been easy to do better this time. For smaller men it would not have been easy to do as well, and that is why I call attention to Mr. Lippmann's nightmare. With smaller men he might have been right, and so the fact that he was wrong is not so much a mark against him as a tribute to them.

I am no military man, and in turning to the troubles we have had in the execution of our policy in Vietnam I must rely largely on professional guides. The best of them, in the public print at least, is Sir Robert Thompson, and I cannot improve on his summary of the underlying strategic difficulties we have had in Vietnam. Sir Robert has argued, I think correctly, that in the big decisions of 1965 we did not include any precise aim

of policy. Obviously there were military directives, but they were directives written in the American military tradition, as broadly as possible. The Administration's method of control was to define the level of the force it would commit, from time to time, and to control the outer limits of the application of that force, mainly with its eye on China. Otherwise it did not try to tell its field commanders how to do the job. It did not even tell them what the job was, in any clear-cut terms. Sir Robert summarizes the consequence in a paragraph of inescapable truth:

"The worst effect of an imprecise aim is that strategy, rather than policy ... begins to dictate the quantity of means which need to be allotted. It was never intended American policy to indulge in a large-scale bombing attack on North Vietnam or to commit half a million troops to a ground war in Asia. These decisions were dictated by a failure of strategy which followed from the original omission to lay down a clear precise aim with the necessary limitations." 33
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It is easier to prescribe a "clear precise aim" than it is to state one. By its very nature, the situation in Vietnam has resisted precision, and one of the understandable complaints against American spokesmen at every stage is that they have sought simplicity and clarity at the expense of the whole truth. But Sir Robert's point remains valid. Even when you do not know precisely what you want, it helps to get as near it as you can. The trouble that needs our attention in Vietnam is not so much that our aims were somewhat imprecise -- that was inevitable. The instructive trouble is that there was a premium on imprecision.

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More accurately, there was a premium on simplification. There always is in war; military men need simplicity of purpose because nothing really complicated can make people do all the very hard things war demands. Political people need simplicity because those who support war at home also need strong reasons -- and for the people as a whole, strong reasons must be simple ones. Little harm is done here when in fact the roots of conflict are simple. But when the war is genuinely complicated, matters are very different; once there is significant doubt about a war every complexity becomes a possible source of trouble. To admit complexity is to encourage doubt; to deny it is to undermine credibility.

A deeper difficulty still was that the needed simplifications of this war were not the same for military men and political leaders. For the military man, in the end, the most critical of all simplicities is that there is an enemy who shoots to kill. Whoever is not with me in fighting that enemy can seem to be against me. Thus there is the strongest possible presumption in favor of any act of force that may be helpful, and those who hold me back are not my friends. And if the restraint is imposed by the very men who have decided to put me there to fight, then indeed it is possible to feel rage.

But for the political man there is a different need. He needs a kind of use of force which will be as closely related as possible to the political effect he wants in the war, and the political support he must sustain at home. Burned villages do not help with either, even when the immediate military justification for the burning is strong. There are a number of other similar questions raised by the conduct of the war in Vietnam -- the net value of search-and-destroy missions, the adequacy of control

over the use of air power against inhabited areas, the use of chemicals and herbicides, the timing and pace of the arming of the South Vietnamese, the rate of rotation of experienced line officers, the policy on "generation" and resettlement of refugees, the relative size of combat and support establishments, the value of minimizing U. S. and civilian casualties, the relative claims of intelligence, pacification, and the line unit for both resources and talent, and so on and on. These are questions, and I explicitly refrain from asserting that I know exactly how they should be answered.

But they are real questions, and they engage both military and political considerations. It follows, at least in logic, that they should be resolved by a process that fully engages both kinds of leadership. This has not happened more than sporadically in Vietnam.

Part of the trouble is simple distance. It is a very long way from the White House to the platoon in the field or the airplanes on a single sortie, and there is room for incomplete perception and for unnoticed rearrangement of priorities at every level. But I am inclined to minimize the element of distance; I think the more serious difficulties are different, and I think that if they are dealt with the problem of distance becomes manageable.

Political leaders don't like second-guessing military men, and military men detest being second-guessed. The political leader in America has always had excellent reasons for maintaining a position in which no one can say that any lack of success on the part of the military was the fault of civilians. This is not merely a matter of self-protection; it is also a proper and honorable sense that any professional to whom lives are entrusted is entitled to reasonable latitude in following his own best judgment. The

President who lets a commander do it his way is not simply looking over his shoulder at possible critics in the political arena; he is also weighing his own obligation to the man on the spot.

And the military -- especially the American military -- have their own tradition of the delegation of discretionary authority. You can order a subordinate commander to tackle any lawful job, under that tradition, but you must be careful not to tie him up in knots by telling him exactly how to do it. Especially when a commander has a theater of operation of his own, he has by our tradition run it his own way.

To these traditions we must add one more -- less long-standing and I think still more important -- a tradition under which the top political and military leadership of the country have developed a relationship often characterized more by bargaining and mutual wariness than by open communications, command discipline, and two-way trust. I find that sentence harsh, as I write it, but I believe that with notable exceptions it is true. And while it has involved many individuals including myself, I do not believe it to have primarily individual origins or meaning. Nor do I think that it would have been easy to do better in the '60s. But if it is right -- and if that posture has given both sides great trouble -- a consideration of its course and character may help us do better in times to come.

Since I am a civilian and may tend to view these matters from the standpoint of a partisan of the Presidency, let me begin by expressing a considerable sympathy for the wariness of the military as they deal with political authorities. Politicians do live by the political clock; they do respond to short-term considerations of public opinion; they

do look over the shoulders of their subordinates on all sorts of matters that less vulnerable figures can afford to take in stride. A recent case that makes the point very sharply is that of President Nixon's intervention in the Calley case. Because of our relative familiarity with due process of law, and our natural feelings about the crimes of My Lai, many of us outside the military can readily understand that professional soldiers could regard that intervention with alarm and even anger. What we must stretch our sympathies to understand is that for many military leaders -- and perhaps even for the military elite as a whole -- the catalogue of honest and deeply felt grievances may be much wider. In the deepest sense, indeed, the military profession tends to perceive itself as the one durable custodian of the national security, and so it tends to perceive most politicians in a purely instrumental way -- as helpful or harmful auxiliaries in the discharge of the military duty. Civilian critics, especially in 1971, after six years of large-scale war without victory, may tend to be preoccupied by the size, the power and the seeming unaccountability of the military. But the military have long memories. They know that budgets have been savagely cut many times before; they know that their political popularity is historically cyclical; it is only natural that they should feel a special concern for their own long-term survival as an institution. They would be unique among members of major institutions if they did not.

But civilians too have had their reasons for wariness, especially in the last decade. I will not repeat Eisenhower's farewell address. Let me simply note, in supplement, that the massive bureaucratic force of the modern Pentagon is something no President, including Eisenhower, has fully controlled. Eisenhower himself had a

certain command confidence, when he chose to assert it, which derived from his military standing, but his successors, while much more effective than he was on some parts of the problems, have suffered in a different way from the fact that they had -- or thought they had -- good political reasons for trying to avoid direct tests of strength with the military. Let me make the point with a simple example. The political campaign of 1968 made it entirely clear that there were deep differences on vital questions of national security between Curtis Le May and the two preceding Administrations; yet it was not in ignorance of General Le May's opinions that in earlier years President Kennedy appointed him, and President Johnson reappointed him, as Chief of Staff of the Air Force. In this case as in others they chose not to risk a confrontation with a powerful political force. The immediate professional competence of General Le May was not in question, nor his responsiveness to direct orders. The fact that he would be fundamentally out of sympathy with the defense policy of his civilian superiors was regarded as an acceptable cost, in comparison with the alternative of a political rumpus over his non-promotion or retirement.

Throughout the 1960s the senior civilians in the Executive Branch justified decisions of this sort on the ground that they must save their political strength for larger questions. There were times when the policy of the Administration toward the military -- and vice versa -- seemed to be little more than a complex calculation of the sort which is customary in warfare itself -- where can we attack, where must we remain on the defensive, where should we seek a truce, and how can we divide our opponents? The analogy is a gross exaggeration, of course; there were many issues

on which the Administration and the uniformed leaders were in full agreement. But for our present purposes it is right to observe and to emphasize the degree to which the relationship on both sides -- perhaps only half-consciously -- was characterized not only by wariness but by the behavior which is characteristic of adversaries.

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The war in Vietnam obviously required these adversaries to work not only in partnership but in evident public agreement. As a consequence, it became the habit of both sides to reduce to a minimum the number of issues on which differences might have to be faced and hammered out. And this contributed powerfully to the imprecision of which Sir Robert Thompson properly complains. It became the practice of the parties to decide together only what it was absolutely essential that they should decide together -- questions like the size of the force in Vietnam, and the geographical limits on the use of force. While the latent command power of the President always weighed heavily in decisions on these crucial matters, there yet remained about the process of decision many of the aspects of a negotiated agreement. In announcing particular decisions to increase or decrease the area of military action or the numbers of troops committed, Presidents have made it a practice to emphasize that they were acting in consonance with the views of their military commanders.

Having decided what must be decided by this process of negotiation, both sides were happy not to confront other questions on which they might easily have had deep differences. Perhaps the most important of these was the question of the real objective of the war, and the amount of blood, time, and money that it might cost. I have an impression, which I could not prove, that if political and military leaders in 1965 had

shared with one another their own private assessments of the likely -- or the acceptable -- size and cost of our effort in South Vietnam, important differences would have to come to the surface. Probably such differences would have shown themselves not only across the line between the military and the civilians, but also from one soldier or civilian to another. Nor is it in any way unusual that there should be such differences; the course of war is notoriously unpredictable; in the case of limited war estimates of acceptable cost are equally debatable. There is no case in our history in which the initial predictions of most officials -- civilian or military -- have been impressively accurate. But the point here is different: it is that adversaries trying to work in partnership tacitly agreed to avoid the question of detailed plans and expectations for the full course of the war. They settled what they had to settle, and for the rest they awaited the guidance of events. This process was quite sufficient for the immediate and common purpose of the decisions of 1965 -- to avoid defeat. It has also been sufficient throughout the following years for the purpose of avoiding land war with China. *Rule I*

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But in between it left the course of decision and action to forces that were far from unified in their purpose.

We cannot be sure what would have happened if all those matters of differing expectations and purposes had been fully analyzed in 1965. On the argument of my first lecture the discussions ought to have been conducted both in the Executive Branch and in the Congress. I have already put forward my own guess that the result of the Congressional process would have been a more explicitly moderate and limited course of action. But it may be that I am merely favoring my own preferences. I believed at the

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time that the basic reason for acting in 1965 was that without action we faced the certain prospect of a grievous defeat which would have been perceived throughout the world, and especially in Southeast Asia and the United States, as a result of a failure by Americans to do their fair share of the work. We could not quit, I thought, because we had not done enough to have that right, in a situation in which, largely by our own engagement but partly because of the simple fact of our extraordinary power -- a very large number of people and very important political forces had come to rely on us. I believed then -- and I still do -- that there was then no way of meeting these requirements without some limited bombing of the North and some limited deployment of combat units.

But what no one can be sure of today is whether this or some more cautious -- or less limited -- view of the matter would have prevailed if the question had been fully thrashed out. The decisive announcements of July, 1965, were perceived as moderate and no more than what was then necessary by observers as little given to belligerency as the New York Times and Tom Wicker. But the announcements were also open-ended; we would send General Westmoreland all that he required. Not until March 1968 did the Government put a definite limit on this pledge. It may be that the war, once enlarged as it was in 1965, was bound to take the upward course it did. It can well be argued that those who thought it could be kept more moderate foolishly exaggerated the ability of men to control events -- as they certainly underestimated the strength and skill of the enemy. Certainly there were Cassandras at the time, and while their worst nightmares did not become real, there has been very much more cost

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and pain than most of us would have thought justified if we had perceived it as inevitable in 1965.

But we cannot replay the events of the last six years. We can only learn from them. I will readily grant that one lesson of those years is that war takes a lot of

Ha controlling -- a lot more than we were ready for in 1965. Indeed that is exactly my present point for the future. To control the course of military action you must not merely negotiate with the military. You must consult fully, but in the end you must command.

instructed lesson: wrong. ["6 days of shelling is not enough.]

In 1965 and after, one consequence of the practice of decision by negotiation was the tacit agreement to respect many of the institutional claims of both military and civilian bureaucracies, even where these were not fully consistent with the needs of the war itself. Within the military, in Washington, in Pearl Harbor, and in Saigon, there have been many decision-makers with specific service-oriented interests. It was less the needs of the war than the interests of the Army as an institution which governed the rotation of regular officers in and out of command. And probably parts of the air war have reflected air capabilities rather than the complex restraints which are needed if anti-guerrilla operations are to achieve their real ends. Each service has energetically sought missions suited to its existing resources, and the allocation of such missions took forms which suggest that the process of decision by negotiation was not confined to relations between the White House and the Joint Chiefs of Staff but may also have included commanders of different services in different places.

When all but the largest issues are left to bureaucracies, it is the institutions which already exist whose claims will be most quickly honored. It appears to have happened in Vietnam that the character of our effort was largely defined by the character of the military units which were deployed and by their technical and professional capabilities. No one intended that the process of American deployment should operate to delay the modernization and reinforcement of the capabilities of the South Vietnamese, but it turned out that way. No one intended that the claims of American line units should overshadow the critical need for first-class American military advice and counsel in the struggle for security in the countryside, as well as in up-grading of Vietnamese forces, yet so it turned out. Above all, no one intended that because of the institutional emphases of the agencies concerned, it would take more than two years from the spring of 1965 to the establishment of a genuinely effective institutional framework for the American part of the process called pacification. Yet so it turned out.

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For many Americans it is a "lesson of Vietnam" that somehow the defense establishment must be put in its place. Translated into the terms I have been using, this conclusion would lead to a quite explicit adoption of an adversary attitude toward the military leadership of the country. On the premise that the military bureaucracy, by its very nature, will always press for bigger budgets and for expanded use of military instruments, these critics urge the building of a new political coalition, in Congress and presently in the Executive Branch, which will, as a matter of clear-cut

principle, cut back the size and power of the American military. The tenor of the argument is usually explicitly hostile to senior men in uniform. The adversary relationship is assumed, and sides are clearly chosen.

But to me the dominant lesson of Vietnam in this respect is exactly the opposite. I share the view of critics that our defense establishment has become too big and its bureaucratic rigidity too great. I believe with many of them that a proper consequence of our experience in Vietnam is that we should seek to avoid heavy commitments of military force in any similar case, although as I have already said I do not expect any such case in the near future. I think we can and should redesign our strategy, our force levels, and our military doctrine to conform with such an expectation, and I think this is work for civilians and for soldiers and for the Hill and for the Executive. What I do not think is that this result can be achieved if the chief civilian and military officials of the government perceive each other as adversaries. I will agree that certain immediate objectives of the critics might be gained in such a contest. Certainly budgets can be limited; unnecessary weapons systems can be prevented, and our military presence abroad can be reduced, all in spite of bureaucratic resistance in the Pentagon. But I believe that we need more from the defense establishment of the United States, in the next decade, than grudging acceptance of restraints imposed by a hostile political majority. We must somehow find an escape from the adversary process.

The solution which I suggest is at once simple and complex. It is that we should find a way to restore and to exploit the double powers of the office of President and Commander-in-Chief. We must reconnect the President and the principal

civilians of the Defense Department to the chief military officers of the country as they have not been connected for years, and the way to begin on that process is for the President, and the Secretary of Defense as his agent, to reach out to the professional military leadership and to establish a genuine partnership with the uniformed leaders of the Pentagon -- a partnership built on mutual trust, but sustained first and foremost by the assertion and the acceptance of the President's necessary duty of final decision.

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It is essential, moreover, that in great matters and also in hard ones the command should in fact come from the President. He may rely as much as he desires upon the advice of his Secretary of Defense, but the senior military men must always know that a disagreeable decision is genuinely Presidential -- and when they feel a need for it, they must have a chance to review that hard decision with the President himself. There are at least two reasons for this rule. One is that the law establishes the Joint Chiefs as principal military advisers to the President; when they do not get a chance to give that advice resentment sets in. The second is that even more than the rest of us the regular officers of the American armed services have a genuine and powerful attachment to the idea of service to the President of the United States. They have received their commissions from the President; they perceive him as both the symbolic and the operational chief of the nation they serve; while all other civilians, as I have suggested, are perceived mainly in instrumental terms, the President is perceived as the final center of legitimate authority. I have a very strong impression, though no senior military

officer has ever said it to me, that in their dealings with Presidents the Chiefs like to argue and advise and urge and warn -- but that in the end they are really quite ready to take orders rather than strike bargains.

Yet I am not recommending weakness in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. No President can command alone, and in the relations between the President and the military there is no substitute for a strong civilian top command at the Pentagon. Moreover it is absolutely essential that the Secretary of Defense and his principal subordinates should perceive themselves, and be perceived by others, as the President's men. In both respects the model, for modern times, is surely Secretary McNamara. Effective and sympathetic civilian control requires not a choice between the Presidency and the civilian leadership of the Pentagon but an intimate partnership between them.

But what is also required, and what was not fully achieved in the 1960s, is that the President and the Secretary should find and appoint military leaders with whom they feel themselves in truly close understanding. The armed services can never be fully and affirmatively controlled except through their senior uniformed officers. Officers who are not up to the task, in the eyes of the President and the Secretary, will not get the common job done. And it will not be their fault.

*not
done* Let me take care, here, not to be misunderstood. Neither the civilians nor the military would be well served if members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were selected by the criterion of mere personal acceptability to their civilian superiors. They must be professionals able to win and hold professional respect by more than

temporary rank. From time to time in our history Presidents have unwisely preferred their own old friends, and not all the results have been happy. So in appealing for a special and intense effort by the President and his Secretary to find the men they think best fitted, I am not urging any form of cronyism. I am not even urging that men should be found who are in clear a priori agreement with the President on the big issues: there are too many big issues for such overall agreement to be practicable. What I am urging is that instead of respecting the routine pecking orders of the several services, and limiting themselves to the very few names which are presented by that process, the President and the Secretary should stretch their inquiries outward and downward in the ranks of the service professionals until they find men whom they are ready to treat, not as the respected but somewhat distant agents of a separate bureaucracy, but as trusted professional partners in a great joint enterprise, where all concerned will be fully heard, and where among themselves all differences will be resolved both by trust and by explicit decision at the top.

The converse of this concept of partnership is that the military bureaucracy should open itself up, not only to the President and the Secretary, but to their staffs. Those who have heard military men discussing "whiz kids" and "White House busy-bodies" will recognize that there are difficulties here, and indeed I believe that only the FBI, in the Federal establishment, is less open with other officials, below its summit, than the military. Still it would be a mistake to assume that the colonels and brigadiers will never come clean with civilians. There are plenty of examples

to the contrary. Most of them, moreover, support the basic argument I am advancing, in that they have developed on the basis of human trust among the individuals concerned.

There is nevertheless a serious institutional problem in the Pentagon which will require reform if the kind of command and communication I am urging are to be achieved. This is the problem of the internal decision-making of the JCS as a corporate body. That decision-making is heavily influenced by the fact that the Services are constantly engaged in bargaining with each other over Service-related interests -- my seaborne missile as against your ABM. The bargains the Services strike with one another -- often tacitly -- are most easily struck in private, and until they are struck outsiders find it very hard to share in the process. The whiz kids -- and other staffs that have caused less resentment -- are in large part the result of the inability of the military staffs to open up and serve the proper needs of senior civilians. Yet they are staffs, after all, and staffs will do what their chiefs tell them to. There have been great moments when chiefs of staff like Marshall and Bradley have seen to it that their subordinates were supporting staff for senior civilians too. We can and must have such a time again, and if it helps the government move beyond service bargaining to unified military policy-making, so much the better.

A still more difficult and more complicated problem is that of blending the interests and concerns of civilians and politicians into the chain of command that runs to the field. Here our experience in Vietnam is painfully instructive, in that the military chain has proven weaker than it should have been even in transmitting its

own policies. If it has proven hard to enforce restraints against civilian casualties which were clearly and honorably intended to be effective not only by the civilians who accepted solemn assurances but also by the military leaders who gave them, we must assume that it will be a major undertaking to revise the ways of the services so as to assure that what a President wants happens, even at a distance, and even in matters that are troublesome to field commanders. I believe we can confidently rely on the Army itself to do all it can to prevent another My Lai, but I doubt that those who have been applying air power will take the initiative in a searching and determined review of what it is right for airborne firepower to attempt in limited war. Such a review is plainly needed. It is true that civilians have a share of the responsibility for the way in which air power has been applied, but that fact only strengthens the case for civilian participation in a review of current doctrine and practice.

The logic of the general requirement is inescapable. From the standpoint of the policy of the United States there can be no such thing as an independent military interest. What the generals and admirals do must be what the country wants done, and in complex situations no simple standard will determine what that is. In particular it will not do to make the safety of Americans in combat an absolutely overriding consideration. What is exactly so terrible about war is that it sometimes requires the use of men's lives as means, not ends. But it does not help matters to turn the wheel and say that these means in turn are ends in themselves. There is an absolutely vital distinction between safeguarding the lives of one's own men out of a right regard for their value, and protecting these same lives at the expense of a national mission to which they have been committed.

This is stern stuff, and it is not at all clear that it can be made to work, any time soon, in the American armed forces. With a strange combination of callousness and sentimentality, we have allowed ourselves for many years to confuse these matters, and the first public reaction to the Calley conviction owes much to this confusion. Yet the testing time for a stern view of what men in uniform must risk for policy may not be far away. As I shall suggest next week, the last phase in Vietnam, almost no matter how it is played out, is likely to place extraordinary demands on the American rear guard.

* * *

There are many curious parallels between our military and our diplomatic difficulties in Vietnam, but the one that I think most interesting and instructive is the one between the military men, mostly in active service, who believed their favorite weapon or strategy would be decisive, and the political men, mostly outside the Executive Branch, who have believed at different times that a genuine settlement by negotiation was available on terms well short of defeat. I doubt if any of those who deeply hold this latter view are likely to be dissuaded by anything I say in less than half a lecture -- any more than I am likely to have converted all military men to the view I have just been expressing. But I must assert it as my own conviction that the evidence of the last six years makes it the better part of wisdom to assume that in its insistent and repeated rejection of other solutions for South Vietnam than the solution of the NLF, the government in Hanoi has meant exactly what it has been saying.

(Effectiveness trap; + fear)

unrealistic - but why?

I have recently refreshed my own perception of these matters by rereading a number of the proposals that leading Americans have put forward, over the years, for compromise settlement -- such as those put forward by Senator Fulbright in 1966, by Arthur Schlesinger in the same year, by Kenneth Galbraith in 1967, and by the contending wings of the Democratic Party in 1968. I must not take time here for a detailed rehearsal of each of those proposals, but I think it is a fair comment that not one of them would be put forward seriously today by anyone who wanted to persuade the country that he had a sound and rapid means of ending the war. Every one of them rejected elements of the position that Hanoi has steadily sustained throughout the years, and with the possible and ambiguous exception of the minority Democratic plank of 1968, every one of them accepted -- and indeed asserted -- that if we could not get such an agreement we must, in some fashion and at some level, maintain our combat presence in South Vietnam. And while many of their authors were scrupulous in pointing out that their proposals might not be negotiable (Professor Galbraith in particular was meticulous in this respect) -- I do not think it is unfair to say that the net impression which their arguments created, and sought to create, was that an acceptable settlement could probably be obtained if only we worked at it hard enough. Yet I repeat that I think no one today would take any of these proposals of earlier years as a promising basis for negotiating peace.

It can be argued, of course, that we could have got a much better bargain in 1966 or 1968 than we can get today. But the argument is not easy to sustain. Given the two unchanging items in the agenda of Hanoi --- a unilateral American withdrawal

and an amenable government in Saigon -- there is little reason to suppose that items they do not like today are items they would have liked in 1966 or 1967 if only the right people had proposed them. International supervision, whether of elections or of a cease-fire, has never seemed to arouse much interest in Hanoi; and there has been still less enthusiasm for the basic idea implicit in nearly all the proposals I have listed -- namely that the American presence constitutes a proper bargaining counter for the protection of non-Communist interests and prospects in Vietnam. This notion, indeed, is precisely what the North Vietnamese may well find not only dangerous politically but illegitimate ideologically.

The most conspicuous examples of wishful thinking about the prospects of negotiation are two -- one, in 1967 and 1968, in the later phase of the Johnson Administration, and the other in late 1970 at about mid-point in the Nixon term. The first, of course, was the campaign to stop the bombing of the North. There were a great many differing forces in this campaign, ranging from outright supporters of Hanoi to uniformed mavericks who simply didn't think it was worth it in straight military terms, but the strong center of the effort rested on the honest belief that if the bombing stopped there would be productive negotiations. Most of those who made this argument clearly meant by negotiations what peaceable Americans do mean by that word -- a process of bargaining in which both sides would make concessions and peaceful compromise becomes the order of the day. I have many friends among those who had these hopes; I know of none who will not agree today that since the bombing stopped Hanoi has been much less forthcoming than he hoped. (If I am wrong in this I hope to be corrected.)

A similar disappointment has attended the efforts of those who have argued for Negotiation Now, and for Immediate Cease-fire -- efforts which I believe were influential in persuading Mr. Nixon to adopt the positions announced in his speech of October 7, 1970. I think it will be agreed among careful students that this was very much the most forthcoming set of proposals made by our government at any stage -- and there is much force in the arguments of Administration spokesmen that in this speech Mr. Nixon went well beyond any Democratic position of 1968. But the position of October 7 has attracted no hint of favorable response from Hanoi.

I make these points not because I am eager to score off individuals or groups whose views of the agenda of negotiation have naturally tended to change through time -- and perhaps have changed less than my own. I am trying only to make the point that I think we must now avoid the danger of relying on a belief that peace by compromise agreement is available simply because we wish it were. Especially now, when an end to our combat engagement in Southeast Asia is a national imperative, we must be careful about pinning our hopes to proposals for settlement which carry with them, if they should fail, an acceptance of further American fighting.

Nor do I think it wise to assume that we could have had satisfactory agreements in 1966 or 1968 or 1970 if only the wrong men had not been in charge in Washington. It is probably true that the men in Hanoi have had little liking for either President Johnson or President Nixon, but I think it is unwise to suppose that their intransigence rests on so thin a support as mistrust of particular individuals. It seems to me much more probable that their determined diplomacy is of a piece with their political and military

behavior, and that it is not merely Ockham's Razor but the evidence of their own words which should persuade us that the simplest explanation may be the best: they reject our proposals and insist on their own because they think it would be deeply wrong to agree to a compromise short of the victory to which they have been, and remain, committed.

Having developed this argument in favor of the proposition that a good solution by negotiation has never been as likely as some have hoped, let me at once introduce two other propositions which may be more palatable to those with different and more hopeful beliefs. The first is that it is nevertheless highly important to try, and the second is that I myself think the United States Government could have tried harder and better than it has in the last six years.

It is important to try for many reasons. The most important is that the argument I have put forward to explain Hanoi's intransigence could be wrong. We are not dealing with absolute certainties here; probably Hanoi itself does not know what its reaction would be to every possible combination or permutation of allied or American diplomacy. There is every advantage in testing all the acceptable alternatives --whether of process or of substance, and that has been true from the first. As against the marginal military costs of restraints imposed for a time by diplomatic requirements, it has always been to our net advantage to orchestrate our peace probes more carefully and completely than has usually been the case. I am far from accepting the notion that either civilian or military leaders have deliberately sought to sabotage such probes, at any time, but the same arguments for tight overall control that I have adduced in favor

of close coordination and final Presidential command over military operations apply also to diplomatic efforts and to military actions that may interfere -- or can be thought to interfere -- with them.

device!

"Be thought to interfere" -- the phrase leads to the second big reason for intense and careful diplomatic testing of the chances for negotiation. You must not only get peace if you can -- you must also do your utmost to persuade all kinds of people, Americans and foreigners both, that you are in fact doing your very best in this regard. And in this second necessary purpose we have seldom done as well as we should. Some of the reasons for this failure are personal, but others are institutional -- there is a genuine difficulty in the fact that the more serious a probe may be the more likely it is that part or all of it should be kept secret at least temporarily. Still there is an avoidable cause of error here that is closely analogous to one I noted last week. It is wrong to think that one's own honest view should automatically be accepted by others. Just as it was a mistake to suppose that the leadership and so the responsibility of Ho Chi Minh would be clear to everyone because they were clear to us, so it was wrong to suppose that because every lead had been explored and every wire gone dead, in the honest conviction of the White House, the world should be expected to accept that conviction for its own.

Presidents and their advisers have been aware of this difficulty, of course, and each in his way has tried to deal with it. But I think neither the Johnson Administration, nor the Nixon Administration so far, has made much use of the one device which seems to me likely to be strongly effective in this cause -- and that is the full

engagement, in the whole process of diplomatic probing, of men whose own good faith is as unquestioned as is their independence of judgment and their commitment to the determined search for a negotiated settlement. Mr. Johnson made an effort in this direction in his appointment of Justice Goldberg to the UN, and Mr. Nixon made one in his choice of David Bruce for Paris. But appointments to office in the Executive Branch, however nonpartisan and distinguished, are not enough. I think we are here face to face with the same requirement on the diplomatic front that we faced last week in the process of waging war -- a requirement of partnership with Congress. Such a partnership will not be easy to achieve and sustain -- here as elsewhere the Presidency must contend with the great difficulty that the Congress neither hears with one ear nor speaks with one voice -- the age of Vandenberg is the exception, not the rule. But the imperative remains; only in the Congress -- and there only among a few men at any given time -- can a President and a Secretary of State seeking the support of independent attestation of their diplomacy find the help they need.

One more lesson for the day, and I am done. If I have not demonstrated that negotiation is hopeless (and indeed I have not done so and do not believe so), still I will claim that I have made a strong case that you cannot count on it, and that is all I have wanted to show. If you cannot count on it, you must have an alternative to propose if it does not work. And that alternative, today, can no longer be the one that was implicitly accepted, in one way or another, by so many, even among those who opposed the war, in earlier years. We can no longer stay and fight indefinitely, on any basis, however moderate, in Vietnam. We must do better than that to meet the insistent and rising demands of our own people.

order? || near? ||

So the agenda for our next and last meeting is full. We must find a policy that meets the new demands for a peace of a new American center; we must engage the Congress in all parts of that policy -- including its diplomatic elements; we must find a new and closer relation between the policy-makers and the generals; and in all this we must respect the Vietnamese realities for what they are. It is a large order -- and if I may end with a teaser I will say in closing that I think the place to start is by entering a general negotiation -- not initially with Hanoi -- but first with Capitol Hill, second with South Vietnam, and only then with Ho Chi Minh's successors.

III

Down or Out

Vietnam is not the easiest case in which to seek to apply for the future the arguments I have drawn from our past experience there. In many ways it would be not only easier but perhaps more illuminating to attempt to work with such other varied and important cases as European security, strategic arms limitation, the Middle East, or even ping-pong diplomacy. Moreover, the very divisions and excesses which make Vietnam so painful also complicate the present application of my argument. It is entirely understandable that the Secretary of State only last Friday, should have urged the Senate not to try to act on the hard question of the shared war powers of the President and Congress until Vietnam is well behind us. But Vietnam is not behind us, and the ugly fact is that there is no assurance that its future will be less unhappy than its past. The ending of this venture, which has been the common declared purpose of political leaders in and out of office for at least three years, is proving itself as hard and divisive as the process of engagement. So I conclude that it would be an evasion of our most pressing current difficulty if I were to choose any other case for the application of my argument than the next stage in Vietnam.

As we turn to that problem then, let me begin by a brief review of the propositions we have so far asserted. In essence they are three: First, in the conduct of limited war, or of any complex military enterprise, it is indispensable to maintain the engaged support of the Congress. Second, it is equally essential to maintain close and detailed control of all military forces, primarily through the agency of commanders

or else?

carefully selected for their basic sympathy with the policies of the President.

Third, and finally, it is fundamental to the maintenance of public support that there should be continuous and candid exposition of the purpose and progress of the undertaking. Although their application is if anything more difficult in ending a war than in fighting it, I believe that these three principles apply as much to negotiation and extrication as to the waging of war itself.

But as we turn to this new set of questions, it is important to recognize that the central and even personal role of the President himself can be even greater in ending a war than in starting it. To put half a million men in Indo-China, more was needed than successive decisions by President Kennedy and President Johnson. Both active and passive Congressional roles were essential. But to take those men out, with or without political conditions and with or without understanding or agreement with allies and enemies, is a decision always open to the President alone, and he has a similar lonely authority in deciding what terms of negotiation he will offer or hold back, accept or reject. A President who chose abject surrender in a war with deep popular support might be impeached, but short of this extreme and presently irrelevant case, his power of lonely choice is overwhelming. He can bring the boys home. Moreover it is almost surely true -- in political if not in Constitutional terms -- that only the President can decide to end the war -- which is why there is still something faintly unreal about efforts to end the war by Congressional action alone.

I believe it to be true, furthermore, on the basis of both academic study and personal observation, that the power and responsibility of the President in this respect

NH?

is extraordinarily personal to a single man. I do not think it has been the American experience that in decisions of this sort the views or personalities of even the most trusted advisers are critical -- whether those advisers be in the Executive Branch, in the Congress, or in private life. It was Abraham Lincoln who set the terms for ending the Civil War. It was Woodrow Wilson who framed American policy before and after the Armistice. It was Franklin Roosevelt and then Harry Truman who shaped the way the Second World War ended, and it was John F. Kennedy alone who decided on the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis. Correspondingly in Vietnam today, it is Mr. Nixon who is making the basic decisions on the way to end the war. As long as he is President -- and in the absence of some truly unprecedented unilateral action by the Congress -- his own view of what is right and real will be more important than all the hypothetical scenarios of all the rest of us in and out of government. Quite aside from the wisdom or unwisdom of Mr. Nixon's decisions, this is not an entirely comforting conclusion as a matter of democratic theory and practice. I have already argued that the Presidential election is a most crude instrument of choice in deciding such large questions as policy in Vietnam, but if that is true then it does become troubling that so much should depend upon the cast of mind of a single individual. In the present case it seems likely that the democratic process does play an important part in the President's course of action, in that Mr. Nixon clearly understands and respects the national desire that he get the Vietnam war in some sense behind us before the next Presidential election. Nonetheless, I think it is well to remember right at the outset of any discussion of extrication that whoever

else may have a part in it, the role of the President is uniquely important.

The problem of Vietnam of course is enormously different today from what it was in 1965. The most decisive difference probably, is here in the United States. Where then an effective majority -- not gladly but clearly -- supported the President's decision to go in, now a strong and steadily growing majority insists that we should get out. Within this majority there are strange bedfellows, and the strength of the general sentiment is not yet matched by any real consensus on the ways and means of ending the war -- we should not be deceived, here, by simplistic interpretations of simplistic polls. Nonetheless the center of gravity of our national opinion has shifted from In to Out. The shift has been coming a long time: it is irreversible, and sooner or later, for better or for worse, this majority will have its way. The wonder, in a sense, is that it took so long to grow to its present strength.

In Southeast Asia also the situation is now radically different from what it was in 1965, and outside Indo-China it is substantially better. There is no way of proving what the connection is between this result and the American effort in South Vietnam. But the change itself is clear and great. And what is especially important is that one now finds few political leaders in the area who are prepared to argue that the United States has done less than its share in Indo-China. There are few partisans of a pell-mell withdrawal, but there are also few who question the proposition that an orderly American extrication from the combat role is now reasonable -- not only because it is required by the public opinion of the United States but also because it is now a reasonable course in terms of the regional politics of Southeast Asia itself. In this quite crucial respect

the shift of opinion in Southeast Asia is congruent with that in the United States.

Of Indo-China itself we must speak more hesitantly. There the fog of war covers all four of the successor states, and the uncertainty that has marked all judgments for at least a decade still persists. We know more than we did about the determination of North Vietnam, but we do not know for sure -- we are intended not to know -- what the real present capabilities of that regime may be. In Laos and Cambodia our ignorance and uncertainty are perhaps almost as great, though we can take some comfort in the thought that probably the result in both countries depends on the result elsewhere.

The trouble is that "elsewhere" is South Vietnam. And there, after seventeen years of increasingly close engagement, after six years of active combat, after two years of gradual withdrawal, we still have most sharply conflicting judgments on what the real situation is. And whether through weariness or polarization, or inexperience, or failing editorial concern at home, the reporting of the way things really are -- and the way the people really feel -- has never been harder to understand. There has been "ecocide," says one observer, but the country is about to export rice, says another. The government has never been more incompetent or corrupt says one, but its writ runs further and more firmly than in ten years, says another. And one can hear equally contrasting comments on the success of "Vietnamization," the economic prognosis, the meaning and validity of any elections, and the ability and seriousness of each of the principal public figures in the country. Almost nowhere, in or out of government, is there reporting on the situation in the South that now carries conviction

beyond the circle of those who are hearing what they want to believe.

I myself do not dare to be optimistic, and I do not presume to be pessimistic, about the future of South Vietnam. I do not find it hard, or wrong, to be uncertain. And this uncertainty, in the cockpit country, is to me one of the strongest of all present arguments for new efforts by the President to reconnect himself and his policy to the understanding support of the Congress and the country. What we face as we disengage in Vietnam is uncertain -- and it may well not be good. If we are to face bad results together, we need to know about the danger now.

But let us now step back and consider the President's problem from the standpoint of our first meeting. We said then that the key to a satisfactory policy should be sought not in the claims and responses of a Presidential election but rather in relations with Congress and through those relations to the opinion of the country. We also had to take note of the fact that the present separation between the President and the Congress on the ways and means of extrication from Vietnam is almost complete. And I asserted, with more certainty than I feel as I come to defend the assertion, that it was not too late to reverse the trend toward mutual alienation that began in 1965.

Let me begin by recognizing that the chance of change may be zero, for 1971 and 1972. It takes two to cooperate and only one to prevent it, and no one can say with certainty that either the President or the Congress is ready for an effort to join forces on Vietnam in 1971.

Yet the first lesson of our first meeting was the importance of working in full engagement with the Congress, and so it becomes necessary to test the possibility for such an effort. To do that we must step back from the present impasse, and pretend for the moment that we are advising a President who feels free to start fresh, as of course President Nixon may not. What is the best course that can be set that will reconnect the Congress and the Presidency?

My own conviction, arrived at slowly but quite firmly, is that there is now no such course that does not start from a clear decision to set a public date for the complete withdrawal of U. S. forces from any combat role in Indo-China. Presidential proposal of such a date, and its endorsement by some form of explicit Congressional action, seem to me to be essential to the re-creation of partnership in government and confidence in our public. *what if Pres won't? what do you do?*

Let me add at once that I do not think setting a date is a policy by itself. Nor do I think we can be sure that American withdrawal will end the fighting in Indo-China -- we are not the only parties to that conflict, and the very decision to withdraw by a specific time may reduce any influence we might have for peace in the area. Still further, I do not think that a decision to withdraw can be wholly unconditional; national and Congressional opinion would unite in requiring at least a reciprocal release of U. S. prisoners.

But if setting a date is not a policy, it is the beginning of a policy, and it does what nothing else now can do -- it establishes a point at which the war as we have known it since 1965 can come clearly to an end. Until that point is set in a manner

which the country as a whole believes in, the problem of regaining public support for any policy in Vietnam is unmanageable.

The governing object here is to frame a policy the country as a whole can understand and support, and so to begin to reduce the polarization of forces that the war has produced. It is certain that no single individual is likely to produce, for our hypothetical free President, exactly the program best designed to serve that purpose -- and indeed one critically important element of such an effort should be careful consultation aimed at finding the right balance of elements to win and hold the support of Congress as a whole. But simply to suggest the flavor of such a policy let me offer some possible ingredients.

First, as I have said, must come the agreed public unilateral pledge of withdrawal. The conditions need later attention.

Second, and almost equally important, the President must take the lead in making it plain that this matter, already so painful and costly, may well have a tragic last act as well. The hard truth about Vietnam is that while we have been able to prevent defeat, and while in the intervening years there have been large and hopeful changes in the region as a whole which make the so-called "domino theory" much less relevant than I think it once was, still there is no assurance of a good result in South Vietnam itself or in the rest of Indo-China. The outcome depends on the Vietnamese, as it always has. NEVER

Third, as the United States ends its own part in the fighting, by its own unilateral decision, it should continue to participate actively in efforts for a

negotiated settlement. I must repeat here what I argued last week, that I myself do not think the prospects for a compromise agreement are bright; the difficulties and uncertainties are brilliantly examined by Professor Hoffmann in the article I suggested that you read^N -- and I myself fear that Mr. Hoffmann has overstated the prospect of responsiveness from Hanoi. As he himself points out, these are much more dogmatic men than the Algerians, and they know that, unlike the Algerians, they will not get what they want merely by the departure of the foreigners. The low prospect for a successful final negotiation is indeed the decisive reason for planning a unilateral way out of the battle. Yet determined effort to get a general settlement must be a part of our policy as we withdraw.

Fourth, we must condition our own future relations to South Vietnam on the degree of openness and fairness in the electoral process now set for the later months of 1971. It is probably true that many people in Indo-China -- of whatever political persuasion -- do not perceive elections as we do, and that even without duress they tend to vote for those who seem to them to represent presently effective power. It is also true that in the past Americans of differing opinions have put excessive weight -- of hope or of criticism -- on the Vietnamese electoral process. Still the relative quality of the coming cycle of elections is a matter of importance to the American people, and it should be made clear now that the readiness of the President and the Congress to give continuing help to the winners of that election will be greatly affected by the degree of integrity that we find in the electoral process.

N. Stanley Hoffmann, "Vietnam: An Algerian Solution?" Foreign Policy, Spring 1971

Fifth, if negotiations do not lead to peace, and if the winners of the elections are perceived as a legitimate government, the United States must be ready to continue some level of military and economic assistance to Saigon. For those who oppose the war as it is now, this may be the most controversial and difficult of the suggestions I am making. Certainly it will not appeal to those who are convinced that we are, quite simply, on the wrong side. Nor will it be easily supported by those to whom it is the war itself that is the enemy, and I should pause to say that this feeling is one for which I have deep sympathy -- all wars are terrible, and this one has special cruelties and pains which -- together with all its political and moral ambiguities -- make it a truly searing tragedy.

Still I do not believe we can in good conscience decide for the people of South Vietnam that their armed forces, unlike those directed from the North, are to have no further outside help on any conditions. Unlike our decision to withdraw our own combat forces, such an abandonment -- unless justified by an honest conclusion that the government was truly illegitimate and continued fighting therefore unjustified -- would be a breach of faith. So it is good that such careful advocates of withdrawal as Mr. Hoffmann, Ambassador Yost and Townsend Hoopes have recently made the point, in public statements, that there are conditions in which additional military assistance would be necessary. Their conditions may not be precisely mine, and for my own part I recognize that there should be no unconditional blank check here. But I do think explicit acceptance of this contingent responsibility is a necessary part of a new and balanced policy.

Let me pause here to note that all five of the elements of policy I have so far suggested would gain in their effectiveness to the degree that they can be shared

with Congress. A Congressionally affirmed date of withdrawal, given the history of the war, will obviously be more persuasive, at home and abroad, than one announced by the President alone. Perhaps there is even greater importance to Congressional participation in the maintenance of careful and honest discussion of the real situation and its real difficulties. And it would seem wise to me for the President to engage the Congress directly in matters like the assessment of the real situation, the oversight of elections, and the progress of negotiations. This might be done largely through standing committees but it might also prove wise to give special roles of particular importance to individual members who by avoiding polemics have retained the confidence of colleagues of differing views. I think there should be Senators and Congressmen in Saigon for the election; Senators in Paris for the negotiations -- both at the warm invitation of the President.

Certainly there will have to be close Congressional engagement, at every stage, in the sixth element of a possible policy, which is that the United States should reaffirm and amplify the pledge first made at Baltimore in 1965, under which President Johnson promised extensive economic assistance to all parts of Indo-China as peace-making permits. Such economic assistance could, I think, have a more national support than is now accorded to other foreign assistance programs. We have usually done our full share in post-war reconstruction efforts. Moreover it is much less expensive to rebuild than to destroy. While I do not want for one moment to minimize the toll of suffering and destruction levied in the last decade in Indo-China, I think it is equally wrong to suppose that there can be no recovery, once peace comes. There is much

recovery already, and I have no doubt at all that with a decade of peace all of Indo-China could move ahead to a level of economic, social and simple human well-being that will outmatch any time in its past. The land is rich; the people are talented, and greater recoveries have been made from much more destructive wars. Anger over suffering is understandable, but despair is wrong, and all Americans of good will must want a part in reconstruction.

Yet I must pause again to warn that this bright prospect cannot be achieved except in the aftermath of a settlement perceived as reasonable by our people. No matter what honest and angry opponents of the war may urge, there will be no payment of "reparations" from a humiliated America. The nation is proud, and its purpose has been decent. It will recognize obligations of honor but not of guilt. The fuel for reconstruction will be found in reconciliation, not in rage.

And we must recognize that a fair settlement is not the likely early outcome. Indeed I myself believe that we must be fully prepared for two other grim possibilities which may be inherent in the realities of Vietnam -- one an obvious, rapid and forced collapse of all but Communist power -- and the other a continuation of the conflict, with the balance of strength shifting only slowly one way or the other. In the former case we would have no part to play for years; in the latter we would be able to help only the South -- and only in the shadow of continued struggle.

Having sketched so briefly six elements of a modified policy, let us go on to consider just two pieces of hard fine print -- what date should be set and what conditions we should attach to our unilateral withdrawal of forces. The date we should

What if we don't... election of '71?

offer is not easy to choose. I think December 31 of this year is now much too close. And I do not believe a date that is much later than our own national election will command public confidence even if it is endorsed by Congress. Military needs, and the views of Americans and Vietnamese in Saigon, would counsel the latest date acceptable to our public. All things considered I would today propose to my hypothetical President a date 12 to 18 months after the enactment of the supporting Congressional resolution, and of course earlier if a general settlement could be negotiated.

Conditions should be minimal, but at least two are desirable. One, which is very important to our own forces and to any President, is probably achievable as a matter of informal understanding -- that is that there shall be no effort to make largescale attacks on our forces as they are leaving. The other is as obvious as it is tricky: the release of American prisoners. It is obvious in that it has overwhelming popular support, so that Congress would not join in a resolution of withdrawal without it. But it is tricky in that it is by no means obvious that the prisoners will be released in return for the kind of withdrawal here proposed. Here again we must not accept a gloomy conclusion without effort, but it is certainly possible that Hanoi will keep our men at least until it has our pledge to give no further support of any sort to those who resist the Communists in Vietnam. And until there is a general settlement that is a pledge the President cannot give, not without visible betrayal. We must try to trade withdrawal for prisoners, and any failure must be shown to be the fault of others. But we may not succeed. It may well turn out that those are right who remind us that in most wars the release of prisoners results from settlement -- and not simply from the

withdrawal of the troops of one party.

Here on the prisoner issue we have a reminder of the cruel hardness of Vietnam. It is not an easy place to get out of except on the terms of Hanoi. The difficulty of extrication has been critical to the process of decision-making right from the first. In the years in which I had a part in the process of increasing involvement, from 1961 to 1966, one of the most decisive considerations, at every stage, was the very great difficulty -- we would have said the impossibility -- of devising an alternative that would get us out of Vietnam in acceptable fashion. Last week I commented briefly on a number of plans for settlement put forward in the early years after the decisions of 1965 by external critics of the war; and I remarked that in my best judgment all of them would have failed and led simply to continued fighting, (though certainly on an importantly reduced scale). There were efforts to make plans for extrication inside the government in these years and earlier ones -- and it was never possible to assess the prospects of these plans in terms that Presidents could be expected to find remotely acceptable. Simply to cut and run was always seen as too costly, and no middle way out seemed viable.

It may be the same now, in the sense that there may indeed be a humiliating collapse after an American withdrawal, and in the sense that unless we are prepared to cut off all help of any kind for Saigon we may not get our prisoners out even by a complete U. S. troop withdrawal. If the price of the return of our prisoners is repudiation of all anti-Communist forces in South Vietnam, I would still oppose it. The policy I would urge a free President to take to Congress does not guarantee peace or define the exact

result of the process it would set in motion. Still less does it guarantee a good result.

Moreover a policy of this sort would clearly require a very high measure of trust and confidence between the Commander-in-Chief and his senior military men. From a distance it appears that General Abrams has sustained with great integrity his obligation to carry forward the President's purpose of Vietnamization. But a plan to withdraw all troops within a year or a year and a half is much harder to execute than what one gathers to be the present military plan: a reduction to a residual force with continuing air power in combat for two or three years. The difference will be demanding, and it will call for just the kind of consultation, trust and command responsibility I was discussing last week.

Our forces could have grave troubles with Communist forces in the process of withdrawal -- although my own belief is that in this respect once a date is set, Hanoi will show restraint. But military relations with South Vietnam could well be much harder to manage, during this last phase -- and it would be particularly important for commanders in this delicate situation to be absolutely resolute in their personal commitment to the policy. Fortunately such commanders should be easy to find (and I am not in any way suggesting that new men would necessarily be needed) because there are many outstanding officers who fully understand that extrication from Vietnam is now the necessary precondition for a renewal of the U. S. Army as an institution.

You will agree, I hope, that I am not overselling my proposed course of action. Indeed our hypothetical President, if he is at all like those I have known,

would undoubtedly wonder how a reasonable man could recommend a policy so full of uncertainty and so open to trouble. And at that point we would have to offer him a look at the still more painful alternative of going it alone. The simplest way of doing that may be to consider the present prospects of our actual President and his potential rivals.

Probably most careful observers of the present political scene in Washington would argue that for their separate reasons both the President and many of the White-House-minded Democrats in the Senate now seem determined to treat Vietnam not as a transcendent national trouble which requires an agreed national policy, but rather as a matter to be dealt with mainly in terms of its possible effects on the election of 1972. I do not say that this is wrong in principle -- I have paid my respects already to the legitimacy of the claims of the Presidential election. What I do say is that in their separate ways both the President and some of the Presidential Democrats may be storing up great trouble both for themselves and for the country.

President Nixon's trouble is that his lonely course of stubborn Vietnamization is both increasingly unpopular, and increasingly unlikely to seem successful in "ending the war" by the fall of 1972. If he really means to put the war behind him, and to do it in time for his success to be evident to the voting public a year from now, he must count on a set of events which seem increasingly unlikely in the light of the powerful probability that Hanoi may conclude that it is highly desirable, on the present configuration of American politics, that he should lose in 1972. If it is obvious to all of us that nothing could give Mr. Nixon more trouble in 1972 than bad news from Southeast

Asia, we must suppose that this point will not escape Hanoi. We know that when the shoe was on the other foot, in 1968, when the Saigon Government had, or thought it had, a deep interest in preventing a Humphrey Victory, that government did not hesitate to do its considerable best to delay Mr. Johnson's decision to stop the bombing, and after all the Democratic Administration had much more influence in Saigon, and a much greater claim on its good will, than Mr. Nixon can expect to have with Hanoi.

So it seems highly probable that if Hanoi fails to create a lot of bad news in 1972, it will be only because it will have lost the power to do so. But how likely is that? The Administration's concern with the question is evident in the fact that its most serious defense of the Laotian venture has turned on the argument that if it could prevent or minimize any North Vietnamese offensive in South Vietnam in 1971, it could greatly increase the prospect of successful self-defense by the Saigon forces in 1972, when American strength on the scene will have been reduced much further. But this is exactly where the results of the Laotian venture itself must raise a question. It may not have been a severe defeat, but it was certainly not the great success that was hoped for, and it may be particularly significant that at the critical moment, in the face of the American judgment that the path to success lay through aggressive reinforcement, the South Vietnamese authorities appear to have decided to limit their losses and settle for half a loaf -- if that. It is not easy to take this result as an encouragement to the hope that 1972 will be a quiet year if Hanoi wants to make it noisy.

I am far from suggesting that Saigon is militarily finished. That is not, as far as I can tell, the evidence of Laos. I have no wish to join forces with those who,

in their understandable anger at our own mistakes and failures, have come to believe that Saigon's forces are so ineffective that they can never fend for themselves. JCS

I do not think we know whether that is so or not. All I am saying is that it seems to me probable that the question will be sharply tested in the dry season of 1972, and quite unlikely that the answer of that year will be as clearly hopeful as the President's political interest would now seem to require. If the battles are severe or indecisive -- or both -- or worse -- and if American air and helicopter support are once more perceived as critical to the prevention of disaster -- if in short the battles of 1972 leave a clear impression that the future, like the past, must be one of endless American engagement or imminent South Vietnamese defeat, then it seems hard to suppose that Mr. Nixon can win the election.

It is well to remember here that our own political process has already struck from Mr. Nixon's hand one of the weapons on which he appears to have counted most heavily -- the weapon of persuasive threat. The President has seldom made a major statement on Vietnam in which he did not make a point of his determination to reply in authoritative and effective fashion to any new effort by Hanoi to impede his policy of withdrawal and Vietnamization. But each of his major ventures -- Cambodia and Laos -- has had the domestic effect of limiting his opportunities for new initiatives. Cambodia produced a convulsion of public opinion and the specific prohibition of the Cooper-Church Amendment. Laos has not been so explosive -- so far -- but its effects, especially on erstwhile hawks, may be still more profound. It seems a safe prediction that as each of these two ventures has had severe costs at home, the

domestic political cost of any third or fourth exercise of the sort would be prohibitive. And even if that were not so, it is hard to see what specific course of action is available to give reality to a policy of threat. The President himself has ruled out the use of nuclear weapons; the evidence of Laos tells persuasively against the notion of a ground invasion of North Vietnam (though this may still be the nightmare of Peking), and surely we are long past the time when we can believe in the deterrent power of conventional air attacks on the North.

So Mr. Nixon's prospect, on his chosen lonely road, is not enticing. The chance of a successful negotiation with Hanoi on his current terms seems nearly zero; the dangers inherent in the force levels that seem projected for 1972 -- way down but not yet out -- are very great, and his "options" will then be tightly constrained. His announced aim is to have ended the war as a divisive national issue before the election, but on his present course the chance that he will succeed does not seem bright.

In fairness to Mr. Nixon it is important to remind ourselves that he is contending with a situation created much more by time than by any action of his. The standards of "success" to which he will be held in 1972 are much more severe than those of 1968 or even 1970; as the war goes on, our national weariness -- and our sense of the long-run realities too -- increasingly leads us to see victory as stalemate, stalemate as defeat, and defeat as disaster. It is not at all impossible -- I myself would make it a better-than-even prospect -- that on Mr. Nixon's present course the real strength of "our side" in South Vietnam will be greater in 1972 than it has been since 1961. But that is not what will be decisive in American public opinion. On the scene of battle

Tet was a victory too. What was so important in 1968 seems likely to be wholly decisive in 1972: whether the news from Vietnam makes it look as if it is really ending, and with every passing month the burden of proof will grow. As long as the President calls all the shots alone, that growing burden will be his, unshared.

In Presidential politics trouble for one side usually means hope for the other, so that the gloomy prognosis I have just offered for the present course of the Administration may seem to carry a message of some comfort to those who perceive the election of a Democrat -- any Democrat -- as the most important item on the national agenda. But things are not quite as simple as that. Let us leave aside the question whether even the most ambitious politician can really be eager to come to power as a consequence of pain and humiliation for his own country, and look instead at this matter in coldly partisan terms. Whatever a politician may honestly believe about the public value of his ascent to power, one point with which he must reckon is that if the country perceives him as climbing to the Presidency over its own fallen hopes, he is finished. Yet this is precisely the danger that most of the Presidential Democrats are heading into. Pressed by the internal dynamics of the quest for their party's nomination, they move steadily toward an increasingly unconditional avowal of the cause of early and complete unilateral withdrawal from Southeast Asia, and as the primaries come on their positions may soften further.

But the dynamics of today's Democratic primaries are not necessarily those of the country. We must not forget that the growing majority against the war is made up mainly of converts, not Old Believers, and that by temperament many of these converts remain as hostile to the New Left -- and for that matter to Hanoi -- as ever. It follows that if

they cater increasingly to a single segment of the anti-war majority, the Presidential Democrats will expose themselves more and more to a fierce counterattack. It seems unlikely that Mr. Nixon and his political associates have neglected this possibility.

So the current prospect for 1972 is that we may have an election which divides us on a major question of war and peace as we have not been divided since 1940 -- and even then the division was greatly mitigated by the nomination of Wendell Willkie. The analogous choice this time might be Senator Jackson, but his prospects are surely remote. Mr. Nixon's best hope will be to argue to the voters that the Democrats have swung full circle from mindless war to mindless, faithless, and gutless surrender. The effectiveness of this attack will depend greatly on the character and resilience of the Democratic candidate, and its appeal will be limited by the degree to which Mr. Nixon's own course of action is seen to be in trouble. But it will not be a feeble attack, or under-financed, or doomed to failure.

I hope I may have said enough to suggest that the Presidential campaign of 1972, if it turns out at all like this, is unlikely to contribute much to the shaping of a solidly founded policy in Southeast Asia. A conflict of the sort I have projected is likely to force both sides into increasingly reckless oversimplifications, and also into undertakings for the future which have almost no chance of realization. Vietnam, once again, is not simple -- and its upshot is not likely to be full of happiness for anyone. So the probable consequence of this kind of campaign, no matter who wins, is that the next Administration, when it faces the hard reality of Vietnam, will face the early prospect of a severe backlash from people to whom it will have promised -- or seemed

Nixon argues

to promise -- much too much. Since it will have lost the other half of the country already in the polarization of a bitter campaign, its prospects for effective resolution of this hardest of present troubles will not be bright.

This sketch of how the coming Presidential campaign is likely to affect the issue of Vietnam should be as frightening to my hypothetical President as the vision of Christmas Future was to Scrooge. Certainly it scares the Hell out of me, and gives me courage to return to the arguments for a reconnection of the President and the Congress in a shared policy of the sort I have sketched. As against a lonely policy of Presidential Vietnamization, a policy of a shared commitment to total withdrawal from combat has at least the following advantages:

First, it puts the United States Government plainly and clearly on the side of the growing majority of its own citizens in a clear-cut and understandable policy of ending American combat involvement. In that quite critical sense it does give a believable prospect of ending the war as we have known it since 1965, and it reinforces the weakened credibility of the lonely Presidential voice with the authority of a Congress controlled by the other party. It is certain, of course, that there would be difficulty in reaching an agreed position with Congress and it is possible that agreement would be impossible, but even to make the effort would bring many of these rewards. Even in its current mood of disenchantment with the war, the American public is not likely to prefer the Congress to the President when there is a contest between them on the kinds of issues here presented -- certainly not if the President captures the high ground of a clear-cut public policy of withdrawal with a date. Presidents have been fearful in recent years of

*but...! What if (!)
Pres won't
have!*

reaching out to the Congress lest they be rebuffed or led down the garden path, but the true lesson of the past generation is that when a President takes his stand on a national issue that has support from the public, he is not at a disadvantage when he openly seeks to carry Capitol Hill with him.

Second, the proposed policy, by its emphasis on difficulty and uncertainty and its refusal to give easy assurance of success, constitutes a most important insurance against political damage from bad news in the future. If one lesson is clearer than another from the last ten years -- so clear that I have not attempted to labor it in these meetings -- it is that the rhetoric of optimism is dangerous. It is not wrong to say that the South Vietnamese deserve a continuing chance to determine their own future, but it is something else again for a single individual to assume the great responsibility of a judgment that "Vietnamization has succeeded." To the advantage of shared responsibility we ought to add the advantage of modesty in assessment and prediction.

Third -- and at this point I suppose I begin to think in terms of persuading the real people in the real Executive Branch of today -- the policy I have sketched may not in fact be so overwhelmingly different from what President Nixon may have it in his mind to proclaim as a unilateral matter in November. It looks as if the Administration wishes to put the whole question of future decisions on Vietnam into the background until after the South Vietnamese Presidential election in October, in the hope that the present government may be resoundingly re-elected and Hanoi thus confronted with the prospect of failure in a contest between Vietnamese. The Administration may think

that once the election is past it will be safe to announce a larger and more nearly complete withdrawal than any to which it is now committed. And therefore there may not be a very large difference between the withdrawals of forces that would be required by my sketch of a policy and those which the President himself may now privately intend. Certainly there is a good deal of force in the comment of Senator Dole, one of the President's own most loyal partisans, that in his announcement of April 7 Mr. Nixon in effect committed himself to a withdrawal date of November 1972.

If there is major substantive difference between the policy I have sketched and what now lies in the privacy of the President's mind, it probably lies in the area of the possibility that he may believe there will be a compelling need for some residual combat forces on the scene for some little time after 1972. Reports from Saigon suggest that U. S. air and helicopter units may be considered essential, in combat-support roles, for two or three more years, and the President may well be keeping his mind open on this point. Yet his press conference of April 29 contains two interesting comments on residual forces. One is the flat statement that he foresees no such need for long-term residual forces as we have found in Korea, and the other, in response to a very shrewd question from Peter Lisagor, is that if the prisoner issue is put aside and the date for withdrawal depends only on the progress of Vietnamization, "we have a very good idea when that will occur." If I do not misunderstand these comments, the President has a date for full withdrawal pretty well in mind -- providing only that he can get the prisoners back as we leave. If that is so, the only remaining difference on this point between his plans and what I have sketched would be a matter of dates. And even

on dates I wonder how great the difference is -- since I believe Mr. Nixon is entirely sincere in his desire to have succeeded clearly in ending the war before he faces the American electorate.

If indeed there should be no critical difference between the President's intentions and the current recommendations in terms of actual military movement, then it seems to me that the political advantages of a shared decision become overwhelming for all the reasons which I have already presented -- the escape from personal responsibility for particular bits of bad news, the partial elimination of Vietnam as a cause of division, and the visible leadership of the President in bringing the Congress with him to meet the solid majority sentiment of the nation. Moreover, a pledge of complete withdrawal should provide protection against the worst hazard the President now faces -- namely, a severe reverse in battle in 1972. I have already said that I think understanding could and should be reached to prevent major attacks on our own forces as they leave, and I believe also that this policy would change the political impact of any large-scale effort by Hanoi in 1972. So by sharing a decision to withdraw, the President takes insurance against its risks and loses nothing of its advantages.

Fourth and finally, once there is a policy in which the President and the Congress are joined, the position of the United States is greatly strengthened in its necessary negotiations both with South Vietnam and with North Vietnam. The pressure of time does not permit me here to give these questions, and especially that of our relations with Saigon, the attention which they deserve. Here again there is much instruction

in Professor Hoffmann's article, although I fear that his argument occasionally meets itself as he tries to emphasize both the need for subtle American influence and the requirement that basic decisions be taken by the South Vietnamese themselves. His most hopeful prospectus, moreover, requires the assumption that a third-force government of some strength and credibility is achievable in South Vietnam. Indeed he seems to assume that such a government would be the natural result of reasonable U. S. pressure for open elections this fall, after a public decision to withdraw entirely. This seems a less hard-headed assumption than most of his argument. Nevertheless Mr. Hoffmann is entirely right in his emphasis on the importance of careful, honest, and persistent exposition by the United States of what is and is not possible for us under a necessary national policy of extrication. Moreover, I myself believe that to the degree that we recognize as significant the electoral process in South Vietnam, there is a powerful obligation upon us to inform not only the government of Saigon but also the contending parties and the public in South Vietnam of our view of our own role in the future. There is in this sense a most powerful argument for candor now as against concealment until November. The process of disengagement has already shown us that it can easily create tensions between Vietnamese and Americans; the Monday morning comments from both sides on the Laotian venture are probably only a mild sample of what can come later when -- as is almost inevitable -- there are troubles on the scene. We must not compound these difficulties by secretiveness. Even Vietnamese who heartily wish us gone will not be slow to feel angry resentment if they suffer from hasty or secretive action. And of course feelings of resentment may be still stronger among those who have somehow

supposed (with encouragement from our own unwisely excessive commitments) that we really would finish the job alone.

Let me say it just once more: the decision on the future of South Vietnam NEVER has always turned on what the people there think and do. The essence of the meaning of a determined policy of complete withdrawal from combat is that it would in fact do what so many feel that we are only pretending to do in our current policy of Vietnamization -- it would place the responsibility for choice about the future of its relations with Hanoi plainly in the hands of the government in Saigon -- and as far HA as is practicable also in the hands of the people of South Vietnam. What is deeply offensive to many opponents of the war, both in the United States and in South Vietnam, is that as they now perceive Vietnamization it is no more than a pursuit of American aims by increasingly Vietnamese sacrifice. This may not be -- I do not myself believe that it is -- the true intent of the Nixon Administration, but intent and impact have often been very far apart in Vietnam, and the divergence in this particular case is increasingly destructive in both countries.

It is late, and I must close. Let me emphasize that I have not solved the problem. The differences that have divided the Vietnamese people for so many years have not yielded to the application of American military force, and they will not yield overnight to the fact of American combat withdrawal and the adoption of a modest, careful, determined purpose of negotiation, settlement and reconciliation. Short of deliberate HA betrayal and forced coalition, I see no hope for instant peace. Still I believe that the policy I have sketched, and most of all the determination to reconnect the White House

and the Congress in the making of policy, can take us on to a course which leads safely past our own election next year into a time of greater hope beyond both for Southeast Asia and for ourselves. The road may not be short, nor the destination what any of us would have wished, but at the least we can begin to move on from the nightmare of the present.

When a great nation has been pulled apart by the pains of a distant entanglement, in which the immediacy of sharp images (of gallantry and ghastliness) registers on each consciousness what it is readiest to receive, so that we have found ourselves divided among ourselves, age from age and group from group and candidate from candidate, and black from black and white from white and Senator from Senator and even serving officers from one another -- when other problems press with an intensity unperceived when it all began -- when half a generation's time, and death or maiming by the millions have produced no decision -- when above all there is a plain, hard inescapable reality: that the enemy has suffered vastly more than you and still cares more than you do now -- then indeed the pain of the ending may be great -- even if that ending is not as bad as we now fear it may be.

But we are a great nation. This is not a prospect that we cannot survive -- far from it. No American who looks clearly at our whole thirty year record on the world scene -- warts and all -- can allow himself to write off the integrity of our purpose -- the importance WOW! of what we have achieved and prevented -- or the possibility that if we do our best now, we can work past this most searing of all our foreign engagements to a new condition of decent and effective concern for the future of all men -- specifically including both the people of Southeast Asia and the people of the United States of America. It can happen

when a President reaches out to Congress, commands the military, explains reality, and clearly follows the clear public will. I do not think it will happen before.